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CONSTANCE MORDAUNT;

OR,

Life in the Western Archipelago.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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DEDICATION.

MY DEAR LORD CHELMSFORD,

It will probably strike the majority of my readers as very inappropriate that I should dedicate so light a work to one known to them solely as an earnest, honest, and consistent statesman, and as having discharged the grave and important duties of Lord Chancellor of England; but this opinion will not be shared by those who, like myself, have seen your Lordship's unvarying amiability and cheerfulness in domestic life, and whilst deriving instruction from your conversation, have been charmed by the raciness of your humour and the harmless playfulness of your wit.

Thanking your Lordship for your kind en-

REPLY.

CONGRATULATIONS of my friends drive me home. I
have more satisfaction in being permitted to
volunteer myself,


Your Lordship's sincere Friend,

E. J. W.

INTRODUCTION.

THE history of Constance Mordaunt's early life and her subsequent trials were communicated to the Author by that lady herself, who furnished her at the same time with the extraordinary documents to be found in the second part of this narrative. She retained to a very advanced age traces of the beauty and all the grace of manner for which she had been so remarkable in youth. In committing to paper the events of so eventful a life, the author of the following narrative has been tempted to enliven it with descriptions of manners and customs peculiar to the inhabitants of the Western Archipelago in bygone days.

The author pleads guilty to having placed the



capture of the Island of St. Vincent at a later date than that on which it actually took place, but the personages mentioned as having figured on the scene at that time are not altogether fictitious; and in a tale written more for amusement than instruction, she trusts the inaccuracy above mentioned will not be considered material. Since the nomination of Colonial Bishops a great and salutary change has taken place in the morals and customs of all ranks of society. Few prototypes of Mr. and Mrs. Vanderslock are now to be found.

No more judicious choice could have been made than that of the late excellent Dr. Coleridge as first Bishop of Barbadoes and the Windward Islands. To a commanding person he added a deep-toned, harmonious voice, and most dignified and conciliating manners. At his suggestion, liberal grants were made by the Colonial Legislatures for building of churches and the establishment of schools. In those connected with the Church of England, the salaries of the teachers are not such as to command the services of the most competent in their line, but their deficiencies

are in a great degree supplied by the personal superintendence of a very zealous body of clergy, encouraged in their exertions by the present bishop of the diocese, the pious and learned Dr. Parry; and it is but justice to the lower classes to assert, that in intelligence and morality they might compare with the inhabitants of any country in Europe.

CONSTANCE MORDAUNT;

OR,

LIFE IN THE WESTERN ARCHIPELAGO.

CHAPTER I.

ON a windward promontory of St. Vincent, one of the small islands of the Western Archipelago, commonly called the Caribbean Sea, may perhaps yet be seen the ruins of a large white house, once the residence of a Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt.

There was nothing remarkable in the style of architecture, but from its size and position it had become a landmark for vessels making the island in that direction.

An extensive range of rocks stretched along the base of the promontory, jutting far out into the sea. Accessible from above by a winding foot-path, they were a favourite resort of the Mordaunt

family towards the close of day. The atmosphere of the West is far less clear and transparent than that of Italy, neither is there so peculiar a softness in the air, inviting to "*il dolce far niente*," yet man and beast luxuriate alike in repose during the short interval between the blaze of day and the shadows of night.

On the evening on which my narrative commences, Mrs. Mordaunt, a pretty, delicate woman, had readily accepted the invitation of her handsome, aristocratic-looking husband, to accompany him to the rocks, and they started, provided with work and books; but ere they had been many minutes seated, both work and books were laid aside, so engrossed did they become in watching numbers of the finny tribe, who, through the deep transparent waters at their feet, were to be seen hurrying to and fro, apparently seeking shelter for the night among the hollow recesses of the rocks.

Every now and then a shy and restless rock-hind would peep out, and as quickly disappear, whilst the gorgeous parrot-fish flaunted about in undisturbed security, amidst tribes of little pilots, (out in all weathers), with their tough grey jackets striped with black and yellow.

The evening was unusually calm and sultry. A few fleecy clouds alone broke the blue expanse of the heavens; but they had gathered in heavy masses on the horizon of waters, and their summits glowed with the last rays of the setting sun. All nature was in repose, and no sounds were heard, save the booming of the waves, as they rushed into the hollow caverns around, and the occasional skirl of a pelican, a flock of which had collected at no great distance. Some lazily balanced themselves on one leg, whilst others dressed their feathers preparatory to flight. Shoals of porpoises disported themselves around in all the vagaries of excitement; whilst nearer in shore numbers of slender green gars glided noiselessly and gracefully along, forming as great a contrast to the former as do the refined to the unrefined members of society on *terra firma*.

Mrs. Mordaunt was lost in wonder and admiration as she gazed around, and her thoughts ascended from Nature up to Nature's God.

At sunset in these climes the wind generally rises from the sea. A gentle ripple on the water was soon followed by a smart breeze, and the whole scene changed as if by magic. Heavily

laden droghers issued from unseen bays, and slowly ploughed their way towards the town, whilst the whole flock of pelicans rose simultaneously on the wing. Some floated on the buoyant waves, not yet broken into foam, whilst others soaring in mid air, with outstretched wings, suddenly darted down with unerring aim and seized their prey, of which numbers of little gulls invariably despoiled them, perching on their backs, and devouring it in perfect security.

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Mrs. Mordaunt. "I wish, Charles," she said, turning to her husband, "that the girls were here, they would be so amused! Just look at those huge pelicans allowing themselves to be pillaged by the saucy gulls without offering the slightest resistance. I know not which most to marvel at, the audacity of the one or the forbearance of the other."

Mr. Mordaunt sighed heavily, and replied in a tone of great bitterness and despondency, "Nor I either, Rosa; and, do you know, I have been comparing these upstart gulls to the *fainçants* of the court. As idle and rapacious, do they not take advantage of their position to rob the rightful owners of possessions which they or their

ancestors had won by the pen or the sword ; and do we not, as tamely as pelicans, submit to be despoiled ?”

Mrs. Mordaunt’s cheek flushed painfully. She took her husband’s hand affectionately in hers, but did not speak.

She was aware that he laid claim to a dormant title (against the assumption of which by any other, his father had entered a caveat in the Herald’s Office of Scotland), and also to an extensive grant of land in America, made by the Crown to one of his ancestors ; but she knew also the inadequacy of his means to assert these rights. She had once reminded him of this impediment, when his brow had lowered, and he remained so moody and irritable for several days after, that, like a prudent, kind wife, she resolved to refrain in future from entering on the topic, and was about to direct her husband’s attention to some fresh objects which had appeared on the ever-varying scene, when they were startled by the shouts of their little girls, whom they had left amusing themselves on a platform of rocks overhead.

Rising to their feet, they hastily ascended the

narrow pathway which led to it, and were much relieved to find that a miserable little sea crab had been the sole cause of the disturbance.

Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt stood for a few seconds unobserved.

Laura, the elder of the two children, was Mrs. Mordaunt's niece. She had been confided to her care by her parents, who both died within a few days of each other, whilst she was yet an infant, and Mrs. Mordaunt herself a mere girl. The attachment between them was that of mother and child. As Laura stood on a pinnacle of rock, with her long slender limbs, flowing dark hair, and flashing eyes, striving, stick in hand, to arrest the progress of the crab, she was a fine subject for a painter, and the idea struck Mr. Mordaunt.

Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt's own little daughter, Constance, was a great contrast to her cousin, with her light hair, transparent complexion, and sylph-like form. She rushed about clapping her hands in a state of great excitement on the slightest movement of the tiny monster, and between laughing and crying, begged of her cousin to "catch and tie it, but not to hurt it."

"That's easier said than done, Constance," replied her cousin, "unless Jimbo will hold it. Take it up," cried Laura, in an authoritative tone to a grotesque-looking young negro boy who stood by, grinning, but offering no assistance. "If you don't, I'll throw it on you."

"No do dat, Miss Laura," screamed the af-frighted Jimbo ; "he da go bite me."

Mr. Mordaunt now thought it was time to interpose ; but ere he could do so, Laura had dexterously seized the crab by its claws and jerked it into Jimbo's woolly head, where it got entangled. By the aid of a thick glove, Mr. Mordaunt soon released Jimbo from his awkward position, but so ridiculous were the grimaces and contortions of the boy's face and figure, that, in spite of all his efforts, Mr. Mordaunt burst into an irrepressible peal of laughter.

Mrs. Mordaunt tried to look grave, fearing to encourage Laura in practical jokes. "I hope, Jimbo," she said, "the crab did not hurt you ?"

"No, tankee, ma'am," he replied, with the usual grin, "no mo I been 'fraid um."

On this she turned to Laura, and said, in an

undertone, "I wish, dear, I could see you more gentle and feminine in your words and actions."

Laura was so unused to rebuke, that her eyes filled with tears. She looked earnestly in her aunt's face for a second, then threw her arms round her in an affectionate embrace, and suddenly bounded up the rocks, followed by her little cousin.

No two beings could be more unlike in disposition, character, and appearance, than Laura Latour and Constance Mordaunt. There was the difference of nearly four years in their ages, yet they were inseparable companions, and loved each other fondly. The services Laura rendered her cousin in peeling her oranges and canes, helping her over a brook, or taking her down from a tree, were repaid by the latter with unbounded love, admiration, and obedience.

As Jimbo will often be mentioned in the course of my narrative, I think it would be as well to introduce him at once to my readers. Though upwards of twelve years of age, his height was so much diminished by the outward bend of his knees, that, but for the disproportionate size of his head and shoulders, he might have been mis-

taken for a mere child. When nervous he squinted fearfully, and his capacious mouth displayed a formidable row of large discoloured teeth.

Truth to say, Jimbo's appearance was by no means prepossessing, yet he was a great favourite with Mrs. Mordaunt and his young mistresses. To his orphan state he owed the favour and protection of the former. The latter found him useful on most occasions ; and though Mrs. Mordaunt discouraged his attendance on them, he reaped too many advantages from so doing, in the shape of tit-bits from their plates, and in other ways, to refuse his services when required. Jimbo knew where the juiciest canes, the ripest fruits were to be found, was unrivalled in the making of bows and arrows, and could climb the bare stems of the loftiest cocoa-nut trees with the agility of a monkey.

There was in his case no exception to the old saying, "A favourite has no friends;" and so frequent of late had been the brawls between him and the butler, that Mrs. Mordaunt thought right to interfere, and the following anecdote, which was the consequence, will show the low calibre of poor Jimbo's intellect :—

"What is this I hear of you and Jimbo, Mr. Sambo?" said Mrs. Mordaunt to a stout black of about forty, with large paunch and prominent eyes, round which a circle of white shone conspicuous whenever he was angry. "I hear you have been beating Jimbo."

"Hax you pardon, missis. I is sorry to displease you. But de boy does grow so impronce, dere is no bearing he. Would you believe it, ma'am, dat last night, when I did order he to carry one message to massa down at the works, he did refuse to obey me?"

"Indeed, Sambo, you surprise me. He never used to be saucy or disobedient. I must speak to him on the subject. When you go out, please send him in."

Jimbo soon after entered, with a most tragic air, rather trying to Mrs. Mordaunt's gravity.

"What can be the reason, Jimbo," inquired that lady, "that you are grown so troublesome and refractory? The butler tells me that you refuse to do as he bids you."

"Beg pardon, missis. I is wishful to obey you and massa, and eben butler, but—he does send me to de works attar dark."

"And what objection can you have to that?" inquired Mrs. Mordaunt; "you have been in the habit of going there for years, and I should think might find your way blindfold."

"Yes, missis, I *does* know my way berry well, but," after a little hesitation, "I can't cross the passure attar dark. I does see my fader."

"See your father, boy? you astonish me! How can that be? You told me long ago he was dead, and I even gave you mourning for him."

"Oh yes, missis," said Jimbo, looking quite aghast. "He *is* dead; but, I does see his perit."

"See his spirit, Jimbo? Nonsense! What is it like?"

"Oh, ma'am, 'tis a little black dog, which does follow me."

"A dog!" exclaimed Mrs. Mordaunt, with unfeigned surprise; "you are surely not afraid of a harmless dog. You had probably something about you which the dog scented."

"Noting petickler, I shure you, missis; only some small craps o' meat from my dinner I was wishful to gie to my cousin."

"Why, that accounts for the dog's following

you, Jimbo ; and I really cannot see what connexion there can be between your father's spirit and a dog."

Jimbo involuntarily looked over his shoulder.

"Hax pardon, missis," he said, with a terrified air, drawing near, and speaking in a low, earnest tone—"hax pardon, but 'tis my fader ; you tink say, ma'am, I don't know my *own* fader !"

Mrs. Mordaunt found it quite impossible to preserve her gravity, and laughed heartily, to the no small discomfiture of poor Jimbo, who evidently believed in the transmigration of souls. It was rather discouraging to find him so ignorant and superstitious after all the pains she had taken to enlighten and instruct him, but she trusted that as he grew older he would grow wiser, and dismissed him with a slight reprimand.

"I thought, Jimbo," she said, mildly but gravely, "you understood that after death the spirit ascends to God who gave it, and is not permitted to revisit this earth in any shape whatever. Go, and let me hear no more of such folly."

Poor Jimbo obeyed submissively, and no more was heard of his objection to pass the "pasture"

after dark, but he probably did so in fear and trembling.

Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt had been married several years, and Constance Mordaunt was their only child. Her sex had been at first a great disappointment to her ambitious, castle-building father, but she was not the less fondly loved. The property on which the Mordaunts lived had been bequeathed to Mr. Mordaunt's father by a friend, coupled with the proviso that he should drop his ancient family name, and assume that of Mordaunt. To hesitate would have been madness. His family no longer owned a rood of ground in Europe. Every acre had been sacrificed at different times to meet the exigencies of a degenerate prince, and they, like many others of noble birth similarly situated, had been driven to emigrate. The majority went to America; some few found their way to the West Indies, where, after a time, their origin was forgotten, and they became confounded with a host of adventurers of the ordinary stamp.

The position of Bellevue House has been before described. It commanded an extensive sea view, bounded only by the horizon. A lawn stretched

from the house to the brink of a deep precipice overhanging the sea, from which it was only protected by a thick hedge of cactus, whose rich crimson flowers were intermixed, and contrasted finely with those of the large bell-shaped, white flowers of the balsam-tree.

Plants of that description only could be made to flourish in so exposed a situation, the sea often beating up and throwing its spray so high as to impregnate the air around, and sprinkle the lawn with saline particles ; but Mr. Mordaunt's passion for flowers was too strong to give way before difficulties, and under his immediate superintendence, a greenhouse, with a sliding roof, was constructed on the opposite and less exposed side of the house. The experiment was perfectly successful, and in it were collected plants from China, India, and the southern parts of North America, to the delight and refreshment of every visitor, after a hot ride of many miles through apparently interminable cane-fields—yet few there were who did not turn ere they entered, to take a look at the richly-wooded amphitheatre of hills which protected the house from the north winds.

In what charming contrast did the thickly

clustering yellow blossoms of the poui-tree stand out against the dark, sombre green foliage of the locust, whilst here and there rose in majestic grandeur the straight white stems of the palm-cabbage, with its light crown of graceful plumes.

In a dell on one side of the house lay the sugar-works and the cottages of the labourers, each with its piggery, hen-roost, and small home-garden planted in peas, pumpkins, tomatoes, and Chili peppers. Here and there guava-trees and cashews had sprung up, and partly hidden both works and cottages from the dwelling-house.

From the drawing-room windows, at a distance of about two miles, was to be seen the residence of a Mr. and Mrs. Everett, the Mordaunts' only visitable neighbours.

Mr. Everett was a few years Mr. Mordaunt's senior. He had inherited from his father the property on which he then resided, and another nearer town. He was a gentleman by birth and education, and a good practical planter withal. His energy, frankness, and the elasticity of his spirits, contrasted strongly with Mr. Mordaunt's inertness, reserve, and morbid sensibility ; yet they lived on terms of the strictest intimacy, the very differences

which I have pointed out giving, perhaps, a greater zest to their intercourse.

Mrs. Everett was of the same age as Mrs. Mordaunt, but her superior in intellect, the natural advantages she possessed having been improved by education, travel, and the best European society.

She was accomplished and cheerful, had entered earlier on the duties of housekeeping, and was of essential service to her neighbour in her domestic arrangements—truth to say, the duties she had to perform were multifarious.

Besides teaching her two little girls, she had undertaken, at her husband's request, to hold classes for the religious instruction of the juvenile blacks on the estate; then there were the sick in hospital to be visited occasionally; and willing or not, she was constantly called upon by the blacks to settle disputes where the evidence was most contradictory.

Naturally timid, and distrustful of her own powers, she would have persuaded her aunt, Mrs. Latour, from whose house she had married, to take up her abode with her, an invitation which was warmly seconded by Mr. Mordaunt; but the old

lady was of opinion that newly-married people get much sooner reconciled to each other's peculiarities when not observed and commented on by a third person, and the invitation was kindly but firmly refused.

Mrs. Latour acted wisely. Two sets of servants in a house never agree. She had a very comfortable establishment of her own, and would have been miserable without society, and a rubber of whist of an evening.

She was persuaded her Rosalie must find the country very dull. Truth to say, Mrs. Mordaunt neither shared her husband's ambitious views nor her aunt's love of the world ; and she was perfectly satisfied with her lot in every way. She assured her aunt that she was always too much occupied to feel *ennui*, and added, "so sincerely do I think an *ennuyé* to be pitied, that I strive by every means in my power to give my dear girls a taste for the simple pleasures which every country affords more or less."

There were no happier children anywhere than Laura and Constance. On waking at early dawn, their first occupation was to visit the poultry-yard and collect the eggs ; their next to accompany

Mrs. Mordaunt to a natural reservoir in the river, rendered perfectly private by clusters of gigantic bamboos, whose pendant feathery foliage afforded shelter from the sun and rain.

Mrs. Mordaunt, like most Creole ladies, was an expert swimmer, and she delighted to give the girls lessons in natation. Laura was an apt scholar, and would, without the slightest hesitation, jump from a high projecting rock into the stream, whilst Constance could never overcome her natural timidity, and generally stood irresolute till pushed or pulled in by her cousin.

Before breakfast they joined their father, from whom they learned the rudiments of botany. To encourage them, a few plants were confided to their care, and Jimbo was suffered to be in attendance to replenish their watering-pots, a service he always performed under protest, never being able to understand why his young "Mississes" should prefer "dem wortless weeds to ocrea and pettities."

I have said that Mrs. Mordaunt was happy and contented with her lot; not so her husband. Whilst prosecuting his studies in England he had imbibed a dislike to slavery of all kinds, and also

a taste for the society of men of intellect and refinement, such as are to be met with everywhere in Europe for the seeking; and having handed over the direction of his estate to a manager, he was an idle man; and, like all who are idle, brooded over the disagreeables of his lot, adding many which were quite imaginary.

The managers of the neighbouring estates were for the most part illiterate Scotchmen or Irishmen, whose early trials and privations appeared to have hardened their hearts as well as their constitutions.

Intent on enriching themselves, they cared little by what means it was effected, and in order to give the absent proprietors no excuse for personal superintendence, they sent home large crops at the expense of the labourers, overtasking their strength and working them at undue hours.

With such men Mordaunt would hold no communion, and he was always spoken of by them as a proud, haughty aristocrat, intent, with his friend Mr. Everett, on making dangerous innovations which would eventually be the ruin of the colony, if their example were followed. The consequences were, that all their attempts to ameliorate the con-

dition of the slaves by a revision of the laws and substituting those in force in the Spanish colonies (at that time far more favourable than ours), were frustrated by a majority in the Assembly, who were connected with the managers, either as attorneys or supply merchants.

So disgusted and dispirited did Mordaunt at last become, that Mr. Everett felt inclined to remonstrate with him. At last he burst out one day, much to his friend's surprise :—

“Do you know, Everett,” he said, “I have been thinking seriously of freeing all my people, and paying them wages. I am sure it would be a great saving of temper and of money.”

Mr. Everett smiled.

“I cannot say, my dear friend, I am at all inclined to follow your example. I am too old to begin life anew, with a pen behind my ear, or a sword by my side.”

“Well, that would certainly not be pleasant; but where would be the necessity? You have told me that all your domestic servants were freed by your father; that you pay them wages, and that they serve you faithfully. Why should not the mass do the same? For this simple reason—that

they are not yet sufficiently advanced in civilization to make a right use of freedom. No savage works if he can help it; and why should he, in a country where there is so much waste land, and no laws against squatting? All their natural wants would be supplied by a few hours' light work now and then; and whilst they were basking in the sun, scratching each others' heads, or wandering about to drum-dances, our estates would grow up into impenetrable jungles. Depend on it, Mordaunt, no *partial* measures, carried out by individuals, would do good to either party. Slavery is so incompatible with the feelings and sentiments of Englishmen, that the time must come, sooner or later, when Parliament will interfere to wipe out so foul a stain from our institutions. In any Government measure I would most willingly co-operate, even at a great sacrifice; for then schools would be established, churches built, and emigration encouraged. Blackey would not like to see himself replaced by a new race, and example would have its effect. The wants, too, of civilized life would be engendered by education; these, to be had, must be paid for, and to pay for them money must be earned. Undoubtedly, Mordaunt,

there is in the meantime a great amount of responsibility on our shoulders ; but I am content to bear it for the advantage I derive from it. Conjointly with my wife, I do all I can to ameliorate the condition of those committed to my care, and to improve them morally and physically ; and excuse my saying so, Mordaunt, but I think there is great weakness in dwelling on an evil which was not of your own creating, and which it is in your power to mitigate.

“I assure you our people are immeasurably better off than the labouring population of England. And though there are many hardships to complain of on estates where the proprietors are *non-resident*, so nearly do the properties border on each other, and so strong is the force of opinion, that no absolute cruelties can be committed such as one reads of as taking place in isolated places in the backwoods of America. Even the condition of labourers on the less favoured properties here would compare favourably with that of factory people and the mining population.”

“But these are free agents, Everett.”

“Yes, free to choose between that kind of life

and utter destitution. So meagre, stupid, and decrepit a set of people as the young miners, I never beheld in my life ! The majority to whom I spoke had been apprenticed in childhood, and were unfit for any other employment, had they been inclined to seek it."

For some months after the above conversation Mordaunt was more cheerful ; and Mrs. Mordaunt, who loved her handsome, amiable husband fondly, observed the change with heartfelt satisfaction. Such a happy frame of mind was not, however, destined to continue. Mordaunt was waited upon one morning in his study by the manager, who drew his attention to the fact, that "a great part of the estate was worn out, and that the crops could not be kept up unless new lands were cleared and brought into cultivation."

"Well," said Mordaunt, "let it be done. Mr. Smith, you understand these matters better than I do. I never interfere with you."

"But, sir," replied the manager, "thirty new hands at least would be required. With the inadequate strength we have now, it could not be done without pressing on the people."

Mordaunt's brow darkened. "I will not have

them pressed," he said ; and turned abruptly on his heel.

The manager waited a few minutes expecting an answer, and was unable to account for the angry expression on his employer's countenance as he paced up and down. No answer came. Mr. Smith shrugged his shoulders and retired.

CHAPTER II.

MR. MORDAUNT felt more than ever distressed by the nature of his property. He had, until now, been able to lay the flattering unction to his soul, that he had never purchased a slave; that they had been left to his family by one who was not even of their blood; that his father and himself had done all that lay in their power to mitigate the rigour of their fate; that he had attended to their comfort and happiness, temporal and eternal.

They were bound to each other by the tie of old associations. He remembered the smiles with which they had welcomed him, the tears they had shed on the death of his father. Were he to *buy* slaves, how different would the case be! He must look in each individual face, and bargain for human flesh and blood!

His soul sickened at the thought. He resolved

to ride over the estate, and see if the case was as urgent as the manager had represented it to be. It proved so. The land was in many parts quite impoverished, and would not yield a sufficient return to pay the expenses of cultivation. Manure was unattainable at any price, and the labour of clearing wood-land and planting it is very severe.

Nearly a week was spent by Mr. Mordaunt in hesitation and in unavailing reflections. It was evident, too evident, alas ! that he must either add more labourers to the estate, or abandon it altogether !

“‘If ’twere done, ’twere well ’twere quickly done !’” he exclaimed aloud, in the solitude of his closet ; and ordering his horse, he one morning bid his wife a hasty adieu, and set off for town without acquainting her with his mission.

He had heard, a few days before, that a slave-ship had arrived, and he would see what was to be done.

On arriving in town, a concourse of people at the entrance of a large court indicated the position of the slave-market—for such it was, though held in private premises.

Throwing the reins on his horse's neck, Mordaunt dismounted quickly, and was about to enter, when he was arrested on the threshold by the surprise of hearing peals of laughter from voices which he recognised as peculiarly African. His heart beat quick, and he paused to listen.

"Can it be possible," thought he, "that these hapless beings are making merry with their chains?"

On entering, he was for some seconds lost in wonder. The majority of blacks were without any covering save a square of cloth around their loins. A few only, with regard to decency, had drawn their blankets about their bodies. Numbers were seated in groups on the ground, chatting and laughing, apparently with the most perfect unconcern.

They only ceased when desired to stand up to be inspected. Some had, perhaps, merely exchanged one species of slavery for another; others, no doubt, were glad to be relieved from the confinement and miseries of shipboard, and were diverted from serious reflections by the novelty of surrounding objects.

Filled with disgust, and the blood suffusing his

face, Mr. Mordaunt turned involuntarily, and strode towards the door, with the intention of making his escape from so revolting a scene ; but as he did so, his attention was arrested, and his interest powerfully awakened, by two beings who met his eye at the same time.

The one, an emaciated child of about six years of age, who sat in a corner looking around with the timidity of a hunted hare ; the other, a man of about thirty, of almost European features, commanding height, and grave and dignified deportment. He stood apart, leaning against a pillar of the court, his blanket gracefully disposed around his person ; "so still and motionless" he stood, he might almost have been mistaken for a bronze statue.

As Mordaunt moved towards him he slowly raised his eyes, and fixed them on him with a look of such unutterable woe as would have moved the heart of the most inveterate Stoic.

Mordaunt was far from coming under that designation.

Filled with commiseration, he determined to befriend him at whatever cost ; and turning to the dealer, who had followed him at a little distance,

he made a bid for the two objects who had awakened so powerful an interest in their favour.

The trader said "the little girl was not of much consequence, he was willing to exchange her for a puncheon of rum;" but "the fellow belonged to 'a lot,' and could not be taken out of it—people were not allowed to pick and choose in that manner."

Mordaunt did not so much as glance his eye towards "the lot" indicated, but made a bid a trifle higher than a planter who had come up at the same time, and seemed to have taken a particular fancy to the strength and sinews of the object of Mordaunt's predilection.

The dealer did not hesitate between the competitors, and the bargain was struck with Mordaunt, who did not linger longer than he could help in such a den of misery; but summoning his servant to take charge of the lot, he motioned to the man and to the child to follow him.

The man appeared to do so almost mechanically, whilst the child timidly laid hold of the skirts of his coat.

At the gate Mordaunt found his horse where he had left it, and the mule on which his servant

had ridden near it. Signing to the African to mount the mule, he took the child in his arms, and placing her before him on horseback, covered her with his cloak to avoid the sneers of less philanthropic lookers-on.

Turning aside from the high road, Mordaunt took a track across the hills which led to his home.

Never before had he felt so degraded and miserable, and, unable to communicate with his sable companions, he fell into a deep reverie.

Every vexation, every annoyance he had met with since he took possession of his property, was dwelt on and magnified.

He contrasted the green fields and orchards of Old England, and the variety of cultivation, with the scorched savannahs and never-ending cane-fields of the West; the respectful freeborn peasant, with the saucy, reckless slave; the noble castle of his ancestors, with his modest sea-girt home; and at last worked himself up into a fit of despair as to the result of all his care to increase his store, after so many years of (what he was pleased to consider) his banishment.

So irrational and ungrateful is man, when under

the influence of temper and not of reason. Should he not rather have compared his situation with that of the unhappy beings who had in some measure given rise to such reflections, and thanked God that his lot had been cast in so much fairer ground? Instead of which, he had quite forgotten their presence.

Hungry, thirsty, and fatigued in body and mind, he reached his own door.

There his tender wife, who had marvelled at his errand, and was anxiously expecting his return, met him with her gentle, placid smile.

It was the first time he had ever left home without communicating with her, and not having the slightest suspicion of the object of his journey, she was amazed when she saw how he was accompanied.

As he dismounted and placed the trembling child before her, her countenance changed and she started back.

"Oh, Charles," she exclaimed, "have you brought that poor little skeleton here to die?"

"No, Rosa," he replied, "I have brought her, I hope, to live."

A revulsion of feeling immediately took place

in the breast of his wife, and to horror succeeded pity. Taking the child by the hand, she led her into the house. At the door she was met by her own children, who had run out to meet their "papa."

Had Mrs. Mordaunt presented them unexpectedly with a new doll, they could not have been more delighted. They handled the little girl, they patted her, they gazed in her face, they brought her sweetmeats.

Laura ran for a pink frock "she was sure would fit," whilst Constance, who was younger, tried to make her sit in her lap.

These demonstrations of kindness scared instead of reassuring the poor little creature. Nothing pleased her or seemed to excite her curiosity, and she turned an imploring look on Mrs. Mordaunt, as if to ask her protection.

For several days her favourite position was to sit in a corner, sucking her thumb, to the great disappointment of Laura and Constance; but, when they were out of the way, and Mrs. Mordaunt too much occupied to observe her, she would creep close to her chair, and partially hide her face in the folds of her dress.

After the lapse of a week, she once or twice raised the bony fingers of her tiny hand, touched the arm of her protectress as it rested by her side, and murmured "Mamma, mamma," the tears streaming down her cheeks.

The whole lot of unfortunates had in the meantime arrived, and a succession of old stagers went up to the "big house" (as the proprietor's dwelling-house is always called), some out of curiosity, others to welcome them, and not a few to deride.

With the exception of the man first mentioned, to whom we shall give his country name of "Ariba," and the little girl, none of the new comers seemed to feel their position.

The women walked about the house, examining every object with the curiosity of children, but expressing little surprise either by word or by action, except at the reflection of their faces and those of their companions in the looking-glasses.

One girl fled with the greatest precipitancy, but on being brought back and made to comprehend that it was her own face she saw, she screamed with delight, and was never tired of repeating the experiment.

It was a great relief to Mrs. Mordaunt when they were all called away to their meals.

The distribution of clothing pleased them greatly, and it was amusing to witness the efforts of some to fit themselves out. One boy got his legs into the sleeves of a wrapper, whilst some of the women tied the petticoats over their shoulders in the fashion of cloaks.

For a week the new comers were employed in light work, such as sweeping the yard and weeding the garden, but they soon made acquaintance with the old labourers, gradually dropped off, domiciled themselves with those who were already settled, and prepared of their own accord to take their share of the estate's labour.

In the song or the dance none laughed louder or were more cheerful.

"What a deal of sympathy I have thrown away," said Mrs. Mordaunt one day to her husband, after looking for some time at the antics of a party of the newly arrived.

"No amount of sympathy," he replied, gravely, and turning away his head to hide a starting tear, "would suffice for the wrongs of an Ariba."

And yet he knew not all his sad tale !

"True, Charles," said Mrs. Mordaunt, with a deep blush. "I spoke without reflection; I had forgotten him, and my little pet."

It is astonishing on what frivolous pretences some had sold themselves into bondage, and the baubles for which others had been exchanged.

A boy who stuttered so as to be almost unintelligible in any language, declared he had come of his own accord because he wanted to learn to speak "buckra;" and a pretty girl of twelve years old said "her mother had sold her for a string of blue beads," and did not speak of the act as being at all unnatural.

These particulars were got at through an African who had lived many years on the estate, and who came from the same part of the country with the majority.

Mrs. Mordaunt gave the name of Portia to the little girl, on account of a fancied resemblance to a favourite old nurse of hers who had died.

Her story was soon told, when she was able to make herself understood. She must have been the daughter of a prince or chief, for she remembered living in a "big, big house, with servants to attend on her, and having worn bracelets, armlets,

and silver and gold ornaments on her person." Of her mother she never spoke without shedding a torrent of tears.

The day she was seized she had strayed away from her attendants to play in a wood with some young companions. A few got away, others were taken at the same time as herself, but what became of them she did not know. After being divested of her ornaments, a sack was thrown over her head, and her mouth gagged, to prevent her giving an alarm.

In this painful position she was borne off at a rapid rate, and not allowed rest or refreshment until nightfall.

When released from confinement, her limbs were so cramped she could scarce stand. She slept soundly, however, and on awaking the next morning, saw several men and women with their hands tied behind their backs.

After this, she was no longer subjected to the restraint of the sack, but was placed in a covered cart with others, whose language she did not understand.

The party travelled thus for two or three days, stopping only a few hours at night.

At last they were handed over to white men and saw the "big water." Her terror at being embarked in a boat, and launching out, she said, overcame for a time even her grief for her mother.

She screamed, and held on convulsively to the side of the boat with one hand, whilst she endeavoured to shut out the fearful sight of the "big water" with the other. A sailor gave her a push and sent her sprawling to the bottom of the boat, where she lay more dead than alive till they reached the vessel, when one more compassionate than the rest took her in his arms and placed her on deck.

"In the course of a week or so," she said, "she had become reconciled to the white faces, but she could never look at the 'big water' without shuddering."

CHAPTER III.

LAURA and Constance soon became quite fond of the little unfortunate. For a time they were her servants, dressing her, taking her her meals, and selecting the most delicate morsels to tempt her appetite; but she gradually fell into the station which was her fate, and became tractable and useful.

Every year she attached herself more and more to the family, and eventually they loved her more as a friend than as a servant.

In a few months the new comers were as much settled as if they had lived on the estate all their lives.

The juniors had been adopted into small families, whose shelter and protection they repaid by aiding in the house work, and assisting to plant and dig provisions.

The men being furnished with the frames, and with the wattles and lime for plastering, set about building houses for themselves with alacrity, and once installed, were not backward in choosing themselves wives from among their own tribe, or from among others of recent African descent; the Creoles looking down on the uncivilized Africans, whom they contemptuously designate "Niggers."

The man whom Mr. Mordaunt continued to call Ariba was an object of deep interest to Mrs. Mordaunt and himself; at first he sat apart, and kept entirely aloof from his partners in captivity, rarely exchanging a word or a look with any of them.

No smile illumined his sad face, no ray of intelligence beamed in his eyes. The large blue blanket in which Mordaunt had first seen him was disposed decently around his person. The clothes distributed remained untouched and unnoticed by his side, even his food untasted. When reminded of it, he would shake his head and groan; if pressed, he would take a few morsels, and push the rest from him with the distaste of a sick patient.

Once or twice, when unobserved, as he thought, he drew the lively little Constance towards him, and tears trickled down his cheek. It was an affecting sight to see the poor fellow stroking the glossy ringlets of the fair child, and her tiny hands patting his cheek.

There are certainly no comforters like children !

It was learnt later that Ariba had been in his own country a father, a warrior, and a prince !

At the expiration of a fortnight Ariba asked for a hoe, and took his place among the labourers. He never, however, mingled with them, and seemed to inspire them, and the manager also, with respect. He never subjected himself to a rebuke ; an order once given had no need to be repeated ; his task was always well and quickly done. That over, he would walk quietly to his home, or to his provision-grounds, and was never known to join in the song or in the dance with which Africans so often close the evening after a day of toil. Ariba appeared sensible that those into whose hands he had fallen were humane, and in no way responsible for the rigour of his fate. To them he ever proved himself faithful and

affectionate, often offending his rude companions rather than connive at their dishonesty.

A free black came twice a week, of an evening, from a neighbouring estate, to teach those who were desirous of learning to read; and Ariba made rapid progress, notwithstanding the difficulties he had to contend against. The religious instruction was undertaken by Mrs. Mordaunt herself; and she used to say she found him an apt scholar, and that when she succeeded in fixing the attention of the juniors, they were quite as intelligent as children of their age elsewhere.

There was, fortunately, on the Bellevue estate, an elderly woman who understood Ariba's language. She invited him to her house whilst his own was building; and in about a year after, he took her daughter to wife, and became, in time, the father of two sons; events which, it might have been hoped, would have lent new charms to his existence. But even when fondling them Ariba never looked cheerful; on the contrary, it was at those times that his countenance assumed a more sorrowful expression.

An event which occurred after the birth of the second boy roused poor Ariba from the calm into

which he had fallen, and opened afresh the flood-gates of his grief.

A lot of newly-imported Africans came by Bellevue, *en route* for an estate which lay at the other extremity of the island.

There was a suspension of work on the part of Ariba and his fellow-labourers to look at them, as they passed along the high road which the former were repairing.

Ariba had gravely, and almost mechanically, shaken hands with several, when suddenly his brows contracted, his eyes glared, and with the ferocity of a tiger he sprang [on a man] who, with a look of deadly hatred, had rushed simultaneously with himself to the attack.

So sudden and so fierce was the struggle between the combatants that no one dared to interfere. The habitually mild and dignified Ariba seemed to have lost all self-control ; he was like one possessed. In vain did the overseer endeavour to exert his authority ; he heeded him not. The tears and entreaties of his wife were disregarded ; blows fell hard and thick, and blood flowed unheeded by either party, till Ariba, aiming a desperate blow at his opponent, was thrown forward by his foot

slipping, and fell with the whole force of his body on his antagonist, laying him prostrate on the earth.

This was the first moment when the bystanders could interfere with safety; and Mr. Mordaunt arriving at the critical juncture, called to Ariba to desist.

Panting for breath, but not relaxing his hold, Ariba turned, and raised his large and now savage eyes to his master; and the overseer, encouraged by the momentary pause, took the opportunity to drag him from the contest.

Ariba had been sorely bruised, and the man lay senseless on the ground; yet he deigned no explanation, nor did he cast a look behind, but walked slowly away.

The overseer would have recalled him, but Mr. Mordaunt motioned to let him pass.

"Leave him to himself for a while, Smith," he said, "and put another in his place. After such a struggle, body and mind will need repose; and see that that poor devil is taken care of. I cannot help fancying that he has got no more than he deserves, for he has one of the worst countenances I ever beheld. Still we must not neglect the

duties of humanity ; and pray tell the person in charge of the gang to which he belongs that he shall be sent on as soon as he is in a condition to be moved.

Mrs. Mordaunt was all astonishment when she heard of this outbreak on the part of her favourite Ariba ; and she became alarmed when, some hours later, his wife came to say that he had not returned home.

Mr. Mordaunt did not share her uneasiness ; he had observed the direction in which Ariba had gone, and naturally concluded that he had sought the most retired part of the estate for rest and reflection.

In the evening Mr. Mordaunt strolled out towards the plantain-walk, which lay at a short distance up the valley ; and there, as he expected, he found Ariba. He was seated on the ground, his hands clasping his knees, over which his head was bent ; and so absorbed was he in his thoughts and feelings, that Mordaunt at first thought he slept.

But there was no rest for that troubled spirit. He had not heard the approach of footsteps, and did not move till his master stood before him, and

addressed him by name. At the sound of his voice, Ariba slowly raised his head and looked up.

The expression of rage had given place to that of profound melancholy. His large eyes were sunk and lustreless, his lip parched and drooping. Covering his face with his hand, Ariba sobbed convulsively, then, suddenly starting to his feet, as if ashamed of his weakness, he plucked one of the large leaves of the plantain, and folding it into the shape of a funnel, closed at the end, filled it from a rivulet hard by, and drank to repletion.

"Now, Ariba," said Mr. Mordaunt, kindly, "go to your home. Your wife has been seeking you."

"God bless you, Massa," he replied. "By and by Ariba go tell you ebery ting; dis time he heart too big." Saying which he slowly withdrew, leaving Mr. Mordaunt to muse over the extraordinary incident of the morning.

The next day and the next, Ariba was at his work as usual, but on the third day, which was Sunday, he knocked at the door of Mr. Mordaunt's study. The traces of suffering were still visible on his countenance, but he looked resigned. On an invitation from his master he seated himself and began the sad history of his former life.

He had been the chief of a large district in Africa, lying between the rivers —— and —— . The name of the man with whom he had fought the previous day was Mundo ; he was the son of a neighbouring prince. They had early known each other, and been on friendly terms, until they saw, and unfortunately, both loved, the beautiful Zarina. From the first she had given the preference to Ariba, and though his rival had more wealth, and had used many arts to supplant him in her father's estimation, he had not succeeded in his object.

Zarina was an only child, and the good old father loved her too well to thwart her inclinations. With his consent Ariba took her to wife, and for three years no cloud had passed over their happiness.

Zarina was good-tempered, active, and industrious. She aided the female slaves in weaving hammocks of the stoutest texture and most brilliant colours ; her baskets were the prettiest, her fishing-tackle the strongest that could be desired, and she was of so lively and enterprising a disposition, that she constantly accompanied Ariba in his fishing and hunting excursions.

A slight indisposition on the part of their little boy had happily prevented her doing so on his last disastrous expedition. The whole had been planned and arranged by Mundo, and Ariba and Zarina were both to have been his guests.

Zarina much disliked Mundo, and seemed to have had a presentiment of evil, for she was very averse to Ariba's going ; but he was glad, he said, to have an opportunity of being reconciled to Mundo, and, as a proof of confidence, set out with very few attendants.

Ariba had spoken of his beloved Zarina and of his domestic life in a low subdued tone ; once or twice his voice became tremulous, when he paused for a few seconds, covering his face with his hands ; but as he proceeded with his narrative, the nature of his emotions changed. In an excited manner he went on to relate that he had been received with great apparent cordiality, and, as a particular compliment, Mundo appointed three or four of his chief men to attend on him.

The first day's sport was excellent, and all went smoothly. The next it was proposed that the hunt should be further off and in a different direction, and Mundo and himself set out in company.

After a while Mundo left him, on some frivolous pretext, the attendants gradually and almost imperceptibly dispersed, and he remained with a single chief of Mundo's tribe, and a follower of his own, attached to him from boyhood.

Not the slightest suspicion or distrust of any kind entered his mind. Even when attacked in a secluded spot by armed men, resistance to whom was useless, and after the precipitate flight of the last of Mundo's staff, Ariba still counted on a rescue by his host. His own faithful attendant would have shared his fate, had he not been ordered to escape as best he could, with a message of hope and encouragement to the beloved Zarina.

At this point of his story Ariba's eyes flashed, he groaned aloud, and grinding his teeth with rage, instinctively laid his hand on the cutlass which every black carried in those days. It was in almost incoherent language he painted his mental sufferings on finding his limbs fettered, and being told that he was being transported to the coast to be sold as a slave.

A fellow captive, who spoke Ariba's language, told him that there was great distrust of Mundo among many of the tribes in his neighbourhood.

Though not trading openly with the factors, it was suspected that he was secretly bribed by them, and gave such information as led to the waylaying and kidnapping of many helpless and unsuspecting victims.

After this communication, no doubt remained in his mind as to the villany and complicity of his host.

To the disagreeables of the voyage and to subsequent events Ariba never alluded. The loss of his liberty, position, and property, and above all, the separation from his wife and child, seemed to have rendered all other trials light.

Mr. Mordaunt listened with intense interest to the history of Ariba's wrongs. He felt at times that he shared the poor fellow's revengeful feelings; but he made an effort to appear calm, conscious that the only character which became him was that of a mediator. Laying his hand on Ariba's shoulder, he tried to soothe and comfort him.

"You have been cruelly treated, my poor fellow," said he; "but punishment belongeth unto God, and his judgments appear to have already overtaken the villain. He is himself a slave, and will probably be far less indulgently treated than

you are, and must be tormented, to boot, by the reproaches of an evil conscience."

Ariba hung his head for a few seconds without speaking ; at last he rose, and drawing himself up, said calmly—

" Massa, I hear what you say. I no go do Mundo noting. But send he away ; I no want for see he no mo na me eye."

The request was too natural not to be complied with. His ill-favoured enemy was scarce sufficiently recovered from the effects of the chastisement he had received, to walk, and a cart was prepared, in which he was placed. He was sent on to his destination, with a note explanatory of the circumstances which caused his detention.

An action was threatened by his master against Mr. Mordaunt for the loss of his services, but it was not proceeded with, and nothing more was ever heard of the odious Mundo.

For many months after this adventure Ariba's face wore an expression of the deepest melancholy, and he appeared to have relapsed into perfect apathy ; gradually, however, he recovered his self-possession.

His efforts to learn to read were redoubled, and

from the extent of his provision grounds, and the quantity of his stock, it was evident that he was endeavouring to carve out for himself a new and an independent career.

We will leave him for the present, and return to Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt.

CHAPTER IV.

ABOUT two years after the event I have related, Mrs. Mordaunt presented her husband with a son—a puny infant, it is true ; but Mr. Mordaunt had heard that “small children throve the best :” he had himself “known two or three seven months’ children who had attained to the height of six feet, and were strong in proportion.”

Mrs. Mordaunt was not so sanguine as her husband : she had secret misgivings about the babe, and her only answer was to press the unconscious infant closer to her bosom, and to smother a rising sigh !

Laura and Constance were “*au comble du bonheur*,” as the French express it.

Not being allowed to see baby till his toilette was made, they darted off with the swiftness of fawns to announce the joyous event to all the old

crones on the estate, and the rejoicings on the occasion were as great as could possibly be expected.

Mammy Sukey, who was upwards of seventy, was more vehement in her thanksgiving than any of the others.

"Tank God," she exclaimed, clasping her hands together, and looking upwards with affected fervour,—“ tank God for de young massa. 'Spose big massa da go dead, who for mind all we poor creturs? who been da go look pon me; me no hab no behind back; me no hab no *dadie*! me no hab no *mamie*!” Here her voice rose almost to a howl. “Me no hab no *grandfader*, me no hab no *grandmodder*! Poor me one!”

Constance's tender heart was melted by the old woman's sorrowing tones, and tears rose to her eyes; but Laura whispered in her ear—

“Don't cry, Constance. If Sukey's grandfather and grandmother were alive, or even her father and mother, I don't think they could be of any use to her, they would be so *very* old themselves.”

In the evening a consultation was held amongst the old “do-nothings” of the estate, to decide on

the proper time for waiting on Missis, and on the most appropriate presents to be made on the occasion, it being the general opinion that "to go to see" young massa for the first time "two hands," that is to say, empty-handed, would bring him ill-luck.

Each fixed on the offering that best suited her convenience, and great was the commotion among them during the intervening time.

The principal gifts were to be of roots, fruits, vegetables, and eggs. The latter to be placed in fresh-gathered calabashes, nicely scraped for the purpose.

Sukey, being the oldest of the set, and the originator of the vote, considered herself called upon to contribute more largely than the others, and magnanimously resolved upon the sacrifice of her roost-cock—a venerable-looking old bird.

In his youth he had ever been first and foremost in the fight, but had been made to fly so often of late by more youthful and valorous assailants, that granny Sukey began to fear that he would some day disappear altogether, and she decided that he should "make soup for de young massa."

It might be that granny Sukey had an inkling of some process by which old cocks, leather, and all approximate substances, could be reduced to a jelly, and made digestible even for infancy.

Laura and Constance were aware of all that was going on, but, to their credit be it said, they did not knowingly betray the secret with which they had become acquainted.

It could not be helped if, on the day Mrs. Mordaunt made her appearance in the drawing-room, her suspicions were excited by the squeaks of Portia in having her stubborn locks coaxed into plaits, sundry nods and grins on the part of Jimbo directed towards his young mistresses, and a request on the part of these to be allowed to wear their white frocks and blue sashes.

On the appointed day, before Mrs. Mordaunt was aware of it, the procession was hobbling up the hill.

Jimbo and Portia had been stationed as scouts, and on the first appearance rushed breathlessly to the door to announce its approach; and now Laura's and Constance's demonstrations of delight were too unequivocal to escape Mrs. Mordaunt's notice.

They stood at the door craning their necks and peering out until the party arrived within a few paces of the entrance, when they jumped about and clapped their hands with delight.

Granny Sukey acted as spokeswoman, and "Long life and crosperity to de young massa" was responded to on all sides.

He was pronounced "one handsome pickney;" some thought he "favoured missus;" but the majority were of opinion that "he no leff massa no bit—he tan like he spit um out a he mouth."

At their request his cap was taken off, that they might see "if he had hair on his head."

It was made out that baby possessed all that a black considers beauty. "His skin shone, his eyes were round, his nose flat, the little hair he had was straight and stiff."

Mrs. Mordaunt smiled good-humouredly, and took the compliments as they were meant.

Whilst she was engaged in conversation with the old women, the children, with Portia's assistance, were arranging and stowing away the presents, and they were much pleased when papa arrived in time to give the old women a

quarter-dollar each, in addition to the cake and wine with which they had been regaled.

During the time Mrs. Mordaunt had been confined to her room, the girls had literally run wild, though confided to the care of an elderly woman, whose sole business it was to look after them. They were either on the rocks, fishing in the pools with crooked pins, wading barefooted in the secluded parts of the river, groping in the sand or under the stones for crayfish, or flying like the wind in pursuit of butterflies.

One day Mr. Mordaunt found them seated on a Moses boat in a little creek not far from the house, watching the shipping of sugar.

"Really, my dear," said Mr. Mordaunt to his wife, "I think we had better ask our friend Mrs. Everett to take charge of the children for a week or two. I know that she will be delighted to have them, and if they stay at home they will be perfectly ruined. Here they come, without bonnet or parasol, and I found them on the beach. Laura is already as brown as a gipsy, and our darling Constance will be soon as speckled as a guinea-bird's egg."

"You surprise me, my dear," said Mrs. Mor-

daunt, raising her eyes languidly, and looking at her husband. "Catherine undertook to teach them how to hem, and it is really unpardonable in her not to look after them better. I wish, dearest, you would ask her why she did not attend to them as I requested."

On this Mr. Mordaunt went to Catherine, and begged to know "why she had not been more attentive to her mistress's orders?"

Ma' Catherine made no reply, but clapping her hand to her mouth, began to soliloquize, ejaculate, and interrogate, as a black always does, when unable or unwilling to give a direct answer.

"Eh! eh! now tell me how dem pickney buckra do, for find pa' for go na bay? So long me lib pon dis property, me nebber see dem ship sugar. Dem pickney buckra hard head too much; Miss Laura da you da put all dem badness na Miss Constance head."

Then, placing her arms akimbo, she thus addressed the little runaways, fixing her eyes interrogatively on them—

"Wha carry you na bay? Who you been hab deh? Wha' you been da go do deh?" Then,

dropping her hands, she turned coolly to Mr. Mordaunt, and continued in a deprecatory tone of voice—"Massa me can't mind pickney buckra no more; dem too harden, dem no want for hearkee to nobody"—leaving it to be inferred that they had refused to listen to her, when, truth to say, Ma' Catherine had been comfortably smoking her pipe under a tree, and had never bestowed a thought on the girls from the moment they had been confided to her care until called upon to explain her negligence.

Mrs. Everett really was, as Mr. Mordaunt asserted, delighted to have her young favourites with her, and would gladly have kept them longer; but as soon as Mrs. Mordaunt was able to leave her room, she became anxious to resume all her duties.

She found, however, that the time the girls had lost during her confinement could not easily be retrieved. It was more difficult than ever to fix their attention.

The windows on two sides of the room in which they usually sat, opened into a gallery along which the old huckster women sauntered with a freedom unknown to Europeans of their class, lodging their

trays of fruit and vegetables on the window-frames, and offering them for sale in spite of all prohibitory signals. Then there would come questionings from the girls as to where the old crones had got those delicious water-lemons ; or when would the humming-bird, fluttering on a tamarind-branch in sight, hatch the eggs in her pretty nest.

Sometimes, ere they were well seated, would come a summons for their mamma to baby, who was too delicate to be fed ; a requisition for some nourishment for the sick in hospital ; or a message from "Massa ;" and before Mrs. Mordaunt could return, the books were laid aside, the maps closed, and the girls had started off in search of more attractive pursuits.

Not unfrequently there came complaints that "Miss Laura was ordering people about just as if they were dogs," or "Miss Constance had chased the duck off her nest," or "woke up baby just as he was going to sleep.

It soon became evident, even to Mrs. Mordaunt's partial eyes, that the one was becoming overbearing for want of control ; the other idle and mischievous, owing to the want of regular occupation ;

whilst her own health was giving way under the arduous duties of her position.

Mrs. Mordaunt had never been of a robust constitution, and her husband saw, with alarm, the change in her appearance.

His old friend Dr. Mildmay, on being consulted, recommended rest and change of air ; and these she should have, but what would become of the children ?


For the first time the idea of a governess presented itself to Mr. Mordaunt's mind, and he immediately communicated with his wife on the subject.

Mrs. Mordaunt's timidity caused her to shrink from the idea.

"My dear Charles," she said, "what should we do with a formal English governess in a place like this ?"

Mr. Mordaunt smiled.

"Creoles," he said, "always associate the idea of formality with the English : they go to Europe from a West India colony, where every one is known to the other, either personally or by repute, and expect to be welcomed with equal cordiality by perfect strangers. A governess is not neces-



sarily formal. This is certainly not the most lively spot on earth ; but amongst the hundreds of needy gentlewomen who earn their bread by teaching, there must be many who would be glad to find a home, however dull, where they would be treated as gentlewomen. Have you no other objection, dearest ?”

“Oh, many ! The climate might not agree with an European, the food would probably be distasteful to one unaccustomed to it ; and then, should our sentiments and opinions differ, in how difficult and embarrassing a situation should we be placed !”

“True, my dear,” replied Mr. Mordaunt, “and we must endeavour to guard against the annoyances you have pointed out. Our friend Mrs. Everett was long resident in England ; we must seek the aid of her experience.”

In reliance on her friend’s judgment and good offices, Mrs. Mordaunt became gradually reconciled to the idea of a governess. To her surprise, however, that lady by no means encouraged the plan.

“I really know no one, my dear friend,” she said, “to whom I could entrust so difficult a task

as the choice of a governess. It is requisite that a person should be competent herself, to be able to decide on the competency of another ; and so many false characters are given, so many deceptions practised, that the most clear-sighted are liable to be imposed on ; and a mistake as to the opinions, principles, and habits of one to whom so important a charge is committed (without the counteracting influences to be found at a school) might endanger not only the temporal but the eternal happiness of your dear girls. Do you yourselves know any one on whose ability and discernment you could rely ?”

“Alas, no ! The only female relations I have are in America,” said Mr. Mordaunt. “The wife of my merchant is, I have heard, a clever worthy woman, and might, perhaps, undertake the commission.”

“And cause an advertisement to be inserted in one of the newspapers,” added Mrs. Everett. “It is astonishing how little precaution is used in these matters, even by those who are more interested than Mrs. Jobson is likely to be ; and for a trifle more than is given to the servant who assists at their toilet, people expect to meet with a Madame

Elizabeth in piety, a Chesterfield in manners, an Admirable Crichton in accomplishments. I remember, when I was last in London, meeting often on the stairs of my lodgings a young, dressy, and very flighty-looking person. On inquiring of my landlady who she was, she informed me that she was her 'daghter,' and had been 'hedicated' as a governess. About a week after I learnt that this young person had answered an advertisement, had an interview with a lady of good fortune, living a few miles out of town, with two daughters, one fourteen the other ten, and been engaged at a salary of twenty pounds per annum! Her mother was sure she would be very 'appy and comfortable,' the lady having assured her that she would never interfere between her and her pupils; in short, that she should have the sole direction and control of them!"

At this moment a servant entered with a message, and Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt thinking that their friend either could not or would not assist in furthering their wishes, the conversation was suffered to drop.

CHAPTER V.

SOME days after, the friends met again, when Mr. Mordaunt rather abruptly introduced the topic of boarding-schools. He was as ignorant on the subject of these establishments as many others who as vehemently run them down. Mrs. Everett had often before combated his prejudices as an act of simple justice to the school at which she had herself been educated ; but neither having any motive for wishing to convince the other, the conversation had been carried on in a bantering style, and when Mr. Mordaunt found he was getting the worse of the argument, he had invariably turned the conversation by a compliment to Mrs. Everett, considering her, he said, "not a specimen of that system of education, but an exception."

On the present occasion, she soon became aware that Mr. Mordaunt was desirous of information,

and that his amiable wife was an interested listener.

Mrs. Everett dwelt much on the advantage to the young of "early hours, simple diet, and regular exercise. On the habits of order, obedience, self-control, and self-denial" inseparable from the management and discipline of a school.

"'Tis a world in miniature," she observed, "in which the virtues and failings of human nature are brought out, and at an age when they may be either strengthened or corrected, as need be. In these juvenile republics every one finds their level. It matters nothing a girl being noble, rich, or even talented; the chief distinction—in fact, the only one—universally acknowledged is that conferred by superior amiability of temper, character, and conduct. The young are extremely quick-sighted. On detection of a fault, exposure and punishment follow on the heels of each other, and the offender undergoes the severest of all punishments to the young and vivacious—she is sent to Coventry."

"But why should not the faults of children receive the same correction at home?" asked Mr. Mordaunt.

"For the simple reason that they are not so likely to be brought out in a comfortable home where every wish is gratified. If faults peep out, they are scarcely perceived by partial friends, are submitted to by obsequious servants, and too frequently glossed over by a youthful governess, desirous of conciliating all parties; thus they take root underground, as it were, and are not suspected till they show themselves in the exacting mistress, the self-sufficient, exclusive, and unsympathetic acquaintance."

"But surely," said Mrs. Mordaunt, gently interposing, "all home-educated women have not these faults?"

"God forbid!" replied Mrs. Everett, earnestly. "Hundreds so brought up are all that can be desired; they have probably had naturally good dispositions, or watchful, judicious parents. As a general rule, however, I think companionship with strange children most favourable to self-knowledge and to the best feelings of nature. I may probably be wrong, but it has often occurred to me that it is owing to early habits that Frenchwomen understand so much better than we do the amenities of social life. Even when educated at home, they

are accustomed to meet other children in places appropriated to general recreation; and they attend classes where they find they derive no advantage from being rich, handsome, or titled, and that an assumption of superiority on those grounds, or even on that of talent, would bring them into disfavour with master, fellow-pupils, and lookers-on. My argument against a wholly private education does not hold good where there are several in a family; great differences of temper and of opinions must exist among them, which call for forbearance and concession; privileges are accorded to the seniors from which the juniors are debarred. They do not all read the same books, or pursue the same studies, whence inferiority, where it exists, is admitted. In short, self-knowledge, self-denial, good temper, order, and obedience, are so essential to the peace and comfort of the whole establishment, that they grow necessarily out of the circumstances. You have but two girls."

Mrs. Mordaunt started, and tears filled her eyes.

Mr. Mordaunt ventured a remark at random. "I fancy the knowledge acquired at schools must be very superficial."

"Why so?" inquired Mrs. Everett. "I don't see why a girl should not be as well grounded by different people teaching the elements of grammar, history, geography, French, and music, as by a governess who undertakes all these studies; and then, at a first-class school, the masters who attend are always chosen from those on whom public opinion has set its seal."

"Perhaps you are right so far," said Mr. Mordaunt; "but does not the purity of a girl's mind run the risk of being tainted amidst the mixture of companions with whom she must be thrown in a school."

"Not more so, I fancy, than in listening to the gossip of servants in a nursery, or to unguarded conversations among visitors in the drawing-room, from which it is not possible at all times to exclude her. Mrs. Stewart was extremely particular whom she received into her school; and so strict and constant a surveillance is exercised by the teachers in large establishments, that the opportunities for 'evil communications' must occur very rarely. For my own part, I cannot recal an expression or a gesture I should desire to forget."

"Come, come," said Mordaunt, "confess; did

the girls not talk a great deal about sweethearts and lovers?"

"Not to my knowledge," answered Mrs. Everett, laughing heartily; "and had they done so, it would have been but unmeaning babble. Of the masters who attended Campden House in my time, all were, with a single exception, such antidotes to love, that they would have become laughing-stocks to my young companions had they ventured on a sigh or an ogle."

Mrs. Mordaunt had hitherto taken only a silent part in the conversation. At last she spoke, and, with some emotion, asked Mrs. Everett "if she thought the foundation of a sound religious education was ever laid at school?"

"Undoubtedly," was the ready answer. "The practices of religion are very strictly observed. Each day opens and closes with prayer; and no meal is partaken of without a thanksgiving. A certain portion of the Holy Scriptures is read daily, and a day in every week appointed for a rehearsal of the Church Catechism, and examination in Sacred History. But habits of piety, when not inherent in the nature, are undoubtedly best formed at home by the example of loved

relatives or friends, and I would never recommend parents properly anxious on that head, to send their children from them till thoroughly satisfied in their own minds that the good seed had begun to germinate."

"You really think, then," said Mrs. Mordaunt, "that the advantages of a school education are very great?"

Mrs. Everett hesitated a moment. "I don't mean to say that, were I blessed with a daughter, I would educate her entirely at a school; but I would certainly send her for a couple of years, at least, to learn order, good manners, self-knowledge, and humility."

"Campden House was a very expensive school, was it not?" inquired Mrs. Mordaunt, scarce thinking about the matter.

"It certainly was; but masters, teachers, food, in short, everything, was of the best."

Mrs. Mordaunt sighed, and looked at her husband; she felt that most of his scruples had been overcome. *His* mind was, in fact, made up, and already he had begun to turn his thoughts to matters of minor importance connected with the decision he had come to.

Mrs. Everett loved Laura and Constance as if they had been her own children, and secretly rejoiced at the success of her long-cherished plan for their advantage, at the same time she entered fully into the feelings of her friends, and exerted herself, as did Mr. Everett, who was a man of great conversational powers, to introduce topics of general interest, and to calm the perturbation of their spirits.

It was with streaming eyes that Mrs. Mordaunt, on her return home that night, went to the bedside of the sleeping children. How she longed to press her lips to theirs, but refrained, lest she should disturb their slumbers.

Mr. Mordaunt passed the greater part of the night in talking over the matter with his wife, and endeavouring to reconcile her to a separation from their darlings. He urged the enervating effects of the climate on children of their age, that Laura's manner was getting haughty and domineering—and that both the girls were acquiring the Creole drawl, so grating to the ears of Europeans and so difficult to be got rid of. The only point on which Mr. Mordaunt did not dwell was the one which, truth to say, carried most

weight with him—namely, the bodily and mental rest that would be afforded his wife by the sending of the girls away.

Poor Mrs. Mordaunt verbally acquiesced ere she was really reconciled to the idea of a separation.

The next morning she was so pale and nervous that it attracted the attention even of the children, who paused before they embraced her, to inquire if she was well.

It was several hours later ere she had attained sufficient self-command to break to them the decision to which Mr. Mordaunt and herself had come.

Their distress at the announcement was natural and touching ; they cried bitterly, and hanging first on one and then on the other, declared that they never could or would leave their dear papa and mamma—Laura occasionally giving Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt those endearing appellations.

At an early age the feelings are very versatile, and before sunset the girls were full of plans for the future, and had asked as many questions as it would have taken hours to answer rationally.

One favour they begged might be granted

them before their departure. To see baby christened.

To this there could be no objection. It had only been delayed to suit the convenience of the Rev. Mr. Dowdesworth, the sole minister of the Protestant Church then on the island. This good man was glad to be able to comply with Mr. Mordaunt's request, and on the eventful morning all the new comers on the estate were summoned to the "Great House,"* to undergo the ceremony of baptism. Mr. Mordaunt's own little boy was called Harry, after his grandfather, and had for sponsors Mr. and Mrs. Everett, who stood for Portia also. Ariba was habited in a cloth coat, waistcoat, and trousers, presented to him by his intended godfather, Mr. Mordaunt. He was even more than usually serious and dignified ; yet every one said he did not look half so well as he had done when his majestic figure had been dressed by his own hand in a few yards of coarse bamboo.

A short conversation took place between him and the reverend gentleman before the sacred rite of

* The proprietor's dwelling.

baptism was gone through. With regard to the rest of the Africans, Mr. Dowdesworth observed he was "aware of Mrs. Mordaunt's praiseworthy endeavours to enlighten them, nevertheless, it could not be expected that they would be for a time more than nominal Christians ; but he trusted that the seed then cast as it were on the waters would, in due season, bear fruit to the glory of God." In as simple and plain language as he could, he explained to the sponsors the duties that devolved on them, and to the recipients of baptism the privileges to which they were admitted, and the advantages to be derived from a due estimation of the benefits it was intended to confer.

Mr. Dowdesworth had no time to avail himself of the proffered hospitality of his hosts. After partaking of some slight refreshment, he set out early in the afternoon, on his way to town, and kindly consented to be the bearer of a note to Mrs. Latour, informing her of Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt's plans for the children, and preparing her for an early visit from the whole party.

It was so long since Mrs. Mordaunt had left home, that some additions to her wardrobe were found necessary, and a large supply of clothing in-

dispensable to the children for their long voyage across the Atlantic; the time taken by sailing vessels averaging from five to six weeks. These preparations over, there was no motive for delay.

At the period of which I write the prejudice against boarding schools was by no means general. Indeed the aristocracy did not scruple to send their daughters to them, and there were several of these establishments in high repute. Mrs. Everett naturally gave a preference to Campden House, at which she had herself been educated, and furnished Mrs. Mordaunt with a letter, recommending her young favourites in the warmest terms to Mrs. Stewart's care and protection.

It was not long before Mr. Mordaunt heard of a steady captain about to sail for England, and he was so fortunate, at the same time, as to meet with a respectable, trustworthy woman, the widow of a serjeant of artillery, desirous to return home, and not sorry to add a few pounds to her scanty store, and to exchange the wretched accommodation afforded to her class on board a transport for the cleanliness and comparative comfort of a merchant vessel.

CHAPTER VI.

LAURA and Constance were general favourites on the estate, as mediums of communication with Massa and Missis, and the frequent dispensers of their favours. Tears and blessings were showered on them on all sides. Their tender hearts were much moved at a separation from those amongst whom they had lived, and had their requests been attended to, they would have arrived at Aunt Latour's with a numerous retinue, but only Jimbo and Portia were allowed to go with them.

At early dawn the air of tropical climes is delightful, and the family from Bellevue had reached the brow of a hill down which the high road descends into the town of Kingstown, just as the sun had tinged the outline of the rugged hills at the back.

The picturesque little town of Kingstown, with

its horseshoe harbour as calm as a mill-pond, lay in shadow beneath, terminated at one end by a low point and battery, on the other apparently by a fortified hill, standing out in bold relief against the clear blue sky. It was a scene of unrivalled beauty, and Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt paused for some seconds in admiration of it.

Few people, I fancy, ever enter a town after long seclusion without experiencing some kind of emotion.

Crowds were descending the rugged precipitous road, which to this day forms the approach from the windward side.

Overseers in flannel jackets, shoes, and spurs, were urging and kicking their way along on stubborn mules. Here and there was to be seen a lady in nankeen riding-habit, a green mask on her face, or sun-bonnet pinned so tightly together as to obstruct the view, and scarce allow of respiration, her horse led by a half-dressed black, who carried in his other hand the indispensable leafy branch as a fly-flapper.

Pedestrians of all shades, from the swarthy African to the light-coloured child of poverty and shame, wended their way along, chatting, laugh-

ing, and singing, as is their wont, and familiarly nodding to each other as they passed. Mrs. Mordaunt was much amused at being addressed by many as "Miss Rosa."

Some of these people were carrying to market the produce of a small plot of ground rented and cultivated by themselves, but the majority were slaves huckstering for their mulatto owners, or earning by their industry and cleverness in traffic a sufficient sum to remunerate these for the loss of their services.

There was no sullenness among them. All looked cheerful and merry.

There were trays and baskets of fresh-gathered fruits and vegetables, tancias, peas, pumpkins, melons, Avocado pears (commonly called subaltern's butter), pine-apples, and, more luscious than all, large bunches of the yellow banana, cold, melting, and—dangerous.

A troop of girls were descending the hill, balancing their loads on their heads, and almost dancing as they sung in chorus songs of their own composing.

Suddenly the sound of a conch shell was heard, when the voices ceased, and all who could run

started off at full speed. On looking towards the beach, the cause of the movement was explained, Several fishing-boats laden with jack-fish were seen gliding towards the shore.

This fish by no means resembles its European namesake. It is taken in such great abundance that it forms a favourite article of food with the lower classes in the towns. The jack is rather smaller than a mullet of the ordinary size, and is of a fine and delicious flavour.

It was amusing to witness the struggle on the beach to be first served. Men, women, and children rushed into the surf, hung on to the gunwales of the boats, and assisted to drag them to the landing-places.

Most of the females got their petticoats wetted, though tucked up considerably above the knee. Some missed their footing, or were pushed by others in the general scramble, and got completely soused, but nothing seemed to diminish their eagerness and good-humour.

As Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt rode through the unpaved streets of the town, there were many scenes which would have appeared extremely curious to Europeans, but were not new to them, and they were, moreover, pre-occupied.

Numbers of women, with merely a coloured handkerchief round the loins and another covering the bosom, were already washing clothes in the principal river, which runs through the town—an operation which, by the way, is performed in a most singular manner. The article intended to be cleansed is lavishly soaped, laid on a flat stone, and stoutly belaboured with a large, long-handled, flat, heavy piece of wood at discretion. In a yard open to the street, a mother was drenching her infant progeny with buckets of water taken from a neighbouring reservoir. A few doors off, it was an old granny on whom had devolved the business of the morning. Propped up by stones in the centre of the yard was a large iron pot, under which a brisk fire was burning, to which the old woman applied her mouth from time to time by way of bellows, whilst a troop of little naked urchins, as round as balls, with skins as smooth as satin, fed it with sticks gathered from a hedge. In other places, shaving, combing, and all the very peculiar duties of a negro toilet, were going on in public without the slightest reserve or regard to propriety.

On arriving at Mrs. Latour's, they found that

lady already up and ready to receive them. It was the first time she had seen her great-nephew. He was admired to the heart's content of the fond mother, whilst the *amour propre* of the father was gratified by the declaration "that he had already the air of an aristocrat."

A fortnight under the roof of Mrs. Latour passed only too swiftly for all parties.

Mrs. Mordaunt was fondly attached to her aunt, and enjoyed very much her rides with her husband to the beautiful scenery in the neighbourhood.

Mr. Mordaunt had renewed his acquaintance with Mr. Zweertz, the scientific superintendent of the botanical garden distant about a mile from the town, and Laura and Constance found charming companions in his daughters Petronella and Anna.

A sigh would burst from Mr. Mordaunt's heart and a tear steal unperceived down the cheek of his wife as they gazed on the children, and thought of the approaching separation, but these feelings were restrained in their presence.

They looked so unconscious and merry, it would have been cruel to afflict them, so long as it could be avoided.

But the day of separation came, and the long pent-up sorrow could no longer be concealed. I will not dwell on the never-ending embraces of the fond parents, the vehement grief of the little girls, the tears shed by Aunt Latour and Mrs. Everett, the grimaces and contortions of Jimbo, and the silent anguish of the gentle Portia. Such partings can be too easily imagined.

CHAPTER VII.

DURING a long voyage, the only passengers who felt no *ennui* were Laura, Constance, and their kind attendant, Martha Johnston; the latter having nothing pleasant in anticipation, was not at all impatient to arrive. Young as they were, the girls were not insensible to the unrivalled beauty of the scenery on approaching the port of Bristol, and they were amazed, delighted, and oftentimes frightened, at the amazing succession of ships and boats through which the vessel passed within a few feet, in threading her way to the anchorage.

That object attained, and the other passengers landed, Captain Radford, who, besides being an excellent seaman was very good-hearted, found himself at leisure to attend to his charges, and conducted them with their attendant to the Crown Hotel, taking on himself to inform the gentleman

to whom they had been consigned (with fifty hogsheads of sugar) of their arrival.

On this gentleman's going the following morning to visit and inspect the children, he was surprised to find them in the lobby of the hotel, surrounded by fruit-women, whom they had called in whilst Martha was engaged with the washerwoman. After welcoming them, Mr. Jobson good-humouredly selected a couple of pottles of fine strawberries, with which he presented them, but was somewhat surprised at the clamour that immediately arose, and the several demands made on him for compensation, the children having been tempted by the fruit-vendors to taste of almost every pottle which had been offered.

"Oh, what a shame," whispered Laura to Constance, "to make Mr. Jobson pay, when they begged us so hard to take some!"

Mr. Jobson was much amused by the simplicity of the little Creoles, and readily paid a few extra pence to be rid of the women's importunities. Though Mrs. Jobson was absent, he had come with the intention of inviting them for a couple of days to his country-house, but they seemed so wild and excitable, that he dreaded the havoc they might

make among his flower-beds, and limited his attentions to a drive in his roomy carriage with Martha, and a walk with himself round the pretty garden.

On the evening of the third day the trio found themselves at the stage-office in London, where an agent met them with a coach, and conducted them to a snug lodging in the centre of the town—it being rather late, and Mrs. Stewart not prepared to receive them till the morrow.

The streets, though dimly lighted in comparison with what they have been since whale-oil has given place to gas, appeared to Martha and her young charges to be brilliantly illuminated. Everything was new to the latter; and the clerk was much amused with the vivacity and originality of their remarks.

A succession of carriages rushing by like meteors, footmen in gay liveries hanging-on behind; the globes of coloured water at the chemists, the display of plate and trinkets at the silversmiths, excited their wonder and admiration. But an extensive shop of cut-glass, forming the corner of one of the streets, nearly set them wild. “It must be the Queen’s palace.”

In passing one of the theatres, they turned suddenly, and clung to Martha. The link-boys, waving their flambeaux before the windows of the carriages, and nimbly bounding from place to place, appeared to them wicked little imps, bent on mischief, and Mr. Jobson's agent had some difficulty in reassuring them.

It was no longer, "I wish dear papa and mamma were here !" but "Poor mamma, how glad I am she is not here ; how frightened she would be at these naughty, mischievous boys !"

It was late that night ere they slept ; yet, as soon as it was light, they were up and dressed, flattening their faces against the panes of glass, seeking in vain for some of the objects which had so surprised, charmed, and bewildered them the previous night.

Great was their disappointment at the deserted appearance of the street, nothing presenting itself to their eager gaze save a row of formal-looking brick houses, unenlivened except by a phalanx of industrious maids, dexterously trundling their mops at the doors. It was some time ere any other signs of life began to manifest themselves.

First came the ruddy milkmaids, with their

shrill cry, and bright pans slung across their shoulders ; then the bakers' boys, with their pretty light carts, drawn by dogs ; then larger carts, laden with fresh vegetables and pots of lovely flowers ; and oh, the countless pottles of bright strawberries, looking so tempting !

All at once, myriads of living creatures seemed to have sprung out of the earth, and funny sights there were.

How droll was the old clothesman, with his sepulchral voice, and piles of hats upon his head ; and the brisk little sweep, threading his way amidst the crowd.

Laura and Constance were so much amused by the novelty of the passing scene that they did not hear the voice of Martha summoning them to breakfast ; and they were quite shocked when the coach drove to the door to convey them to Campden House.

"Cannot we stay here another day, dear Martha?" they both exclaimed.

Martha's heart responded to the wish, and she felt nervous ; but she answered calmly—

"I think not. Mr. Taylor is below, waiting, I fancy, to settle with the landlady, and to see us off."

"Dear Martha," said Laura, "how sorry I am to think that we must part with you so soon."

"I should not mind at all going to school," added Constance, in a tremulous voice, "if you were to go with us to take care of us."

"I wish it could be so, miss," said the affectionate creature, the tears starting to her eyes; "but that can't be, so I must try to be satisfied. I dare say, young ladies, you will be very happy; and—and soon forget poor Martha!"

"Never! oh, never! dear Martha," they both exclaimed, with tender vivacity, flinging their arms around her as they spoke. And so they thought at the moment; but at their age, memory is apt to slumber for awhile, to be awakened often at a later period. During the voyage, Martha had been unremitting in her care of the girls, and had become much attached to both; though most so to Constance, who was of a more dependent nature than her cousin.

Though Martha was returning to the home of her childhood, her spirits were much depressed, so many changes had taken place since she quitted it. Death had robbed her of the husband of her choice; her lively young brother had enlisted on

foreign service ; and the place of her tender mother was filled by a stepmother, whom she had never seen. There was no one on whose sympathy she could reckon ; she would see her father, and then return to service—the sooner, perhaps, the better. Her only parent would not oppose her doing so ; he was himself working for his daily bread, and those so employed have no leisure for reminiscences of the past or anticipations of the future.

With heavy hearts the trio got into the carriage which was to convey them to Campden House. They were silent, and pressed close to Martha's side ; all at once they uttered an exclamation, and started to the window.

The carriage had turned off the high road, and was advancing up a straight avenue of lofty elms, terminated by an ancient gateway, almost in ruins.

The arch was surmounted by the Royal arms. There seemed to have been a severe contest for the crown, the lion being minus a paw, whilst the broken horn of the unicorn looked a paltry excrescence.

The bright tints of the red bricks of which the house was built had been softened down by the

influence of time and the elements ; and the turrets gave it a venerable and imposing appearance. It had been built for the household of Queen Anne when she occupied an adjoining palace, at the time of which I write the property of one of England's most gifted sons.

Poor Martha had no taste for the antique or the picturesque ; and to the young Creoles, accustomed to air and sunshine, Campden House appeared no better than a ruinous-looking old prison. They gazed with wonder and awe at the solemn approach, and as the ponderous gates swung gratingly on their hinges, clung with unfeigned terror to their attendant.

When the carriage stopped, it was with difficulty they were persuaded to get out, and to follow the portly old butler as he led the way into the house. The parlour into which they were ushered was a square room of large dimensions, used only for the reception of stranger-guests. There were none of the pretty little knick-knacks lying about which are to be seen in all modern drawing-rooms, and which might have pleased the children.

The wainscoting was of oak, darkened by time and varnish, against which hung in heavy frames

portraits of squires with rubicund noses, and formal-looking dames in pointed bodices and stiff stomachers.

The roomy fireplace was black and dismal-looking, and the ample window-curtains, partially drawn aside, showed nothing beyond save a small field, bounded in front and on the right side by a high wall, on the third by an embankment which formed an artificial terrace.

At the sound of approaching footsteps the girls pressed closer to Martha's side, and each put a hand in hers. How quick their hearts beat. Every child on going to school for the first time fancies that a governess must be a very formidable person in appearance, and imperious in tone and manner; it was therefore a great relief when the little girls heard a soft voice inquiring of John where they were."

What a contrast was the lady who presented herself immediately after to anything they had imagined! Though tall, she was slender, with a complexion indicative of sickness and of suffering, whilst gentleness and intelligence beamed from her bright blue eyes. She paused for a moment and gazed on the cousins with an unmistakeable ex-

pression of admiration, then stooped, and kissed them tenderly. She thought, no doubt, of the feelings of their friends in parting with them, and how irksome would be the restraint of a school to undisciplined Creoles.

At a glance, Miss Amiel (for she it was) and Martha were as much friends as it was possible for persons in such different stations of life to be. She inquired of the latter the length of the voyage, of the health of her charges on board, acknowledged the receipt of Mrs. Everett's letter, forwarded from Bristol, talked to her of her plans and prospects, and ended by ringing for the housekeeper to take her to her room for refreshment; but Martha respectfully declined the proffered hospitality, and asked permission to visit her young charges, should she return to London. She struggled hard against her feelings, but there was a choking in her throat not to be kept down, and fondly embracing the children, she hastily took leave.

For some moments they stood motionless, listening to the sound of the receding wheels, whilst tears streamed down their cheeks.

Miss Amiel appeared for a while to be busily employed in arranging some books which stood

on the ponderous table in the centre of the room. When she thought the girls had in some degree recovered their composure, she entered into conversation with them about Mrs. Everett, with whom she had been at school; and then, patting them gently on the back, proposed showing them the school-room.

"I dare say you would prefer it to sitting here, and would like to make acquaintance with your young companions."

Saying which, she led the way into an adjoining apartment.

It was evidently used as a chapel, for in the corner stood a pulpit, and there was a large recess with benches in tiers, but it was then empty, and they passed on to the next room, which was long and low, with a row of windows at the end opening on a broad gravel walk. It would have looked very dull but for the number of its occupants.

There were upwards of a hundred girls from the ages of six to fifteen, either learning their lessons or repeating them. Three long tables were laid across the room, at each end of which sat a teacher, whilst as many more were holding classes at smaller tables dispersed about.

When Miss Amiel entered, all rose, and on a given signal from the teachers, rushed towards the lockers (fitted round the room, like those of a ship's cabin) to put away their books, slates, or work, as the case might be.

With but very few exceptions, these young creatures looked like what they were, the daughters of England's very handsome aristocracy.

When the tumult had somewhat subsided, Miss Amiel beckoned to her a Miss Gordon, a Scotch girl of about fifteen, introduced the cousins, and confided them to her care.

Her low and musical voice, "her blythe and bonnie smile," invited confidence. Laura and Constance soon felt at their ease with her, and both then, and ever afterwards, she was as kind to them, and as vain of them, as if they had been of her "ain bluid."

The arrival of two new scholars from "outlandish parts" could not fail to create a sensation, and they were soon surrounded by curious faces. Their beauty was certainly very attractive; and then they were so strangely dressed. At a time when it was the fashion to wear scanty dresses, clinging to the figure like the drapery of a statue,

the little Creoles had on full and stiffly-starched frocks, of a peculiar texture, which stood out like air-balloons; and their hair, unconfined by plait or ribbon, hung in waves down to their very waists.

It was fortunate for the new comers that Mrs. Stewart, the head of the establishment, was not the person by whom they were received. That lady was very imposing at first sight. She was considerably above the middle height, and the naturally stern expression of her countenance was much increased by the unbecoming widow's cap of the day, which, unrelieved by hair, she wore close down over her strongly marked brows and sharp black eyes. Mrs. Stewart's husband had been dead many years, but she still appeared in weeds; some said, jocosely, "for the purpose of keeping off pretenders;" others, with more reason, to impress her sisters with a sense of their inferiority, she being the only one of a numerous family who had been married—or, indeed, had ever had an offer.

Mrs. S. took little part in the school, most of her time being occupied in choosing teachers, masters, and servants, in giving orders, and in settling bills; but she never failed to spend an hour or two

every day in the school-room, to receive the reports of the masters and teachers, and to lecture those of the young ladies who had been found wanting in any way.

No judge about to pronounce sentence of death on a culprit could have been listened to with more awe and attention than Mrs. Stewart. It must be admitted that she was discriminating and just on all occasions; and the young are easily intimidated by superiors of her stamp.

As new comers, Laura and Constance were naturally objects of peculiar notice with Mrs. Stewart; and after being closely examined and interrogated, they were invited to tea in the parlour the same evening.

The writing and the singing-masters were coming, and she expected that "the interesting little Creoles would be quite a treat."

Mrs. Stewart was in no way disappointed. The West Indies was, at that time, as little known to Europeans as China is at the present day; and even children from thence were looked upon as natural curiosities.

Laura's dark complexion, embrowned by exposure to the sea breeze, made her an object of

special remark. After some discussion in an under tone of voice, it was settled by the gentlemen that she must be a kind of hybrid, "something between an European and an aborigine of the island."

Of Constance's European blood on both sides there could be no doubt. Nothing could be fairer or more transparent than her complexion. At first she was rather shy; but seated on Signor Ferrari's knee, soon forgot her fears; and on his asking her, "If she could sing?" astonished him with a medley new to Italian ears. The first song was a boat-song; and Constance suited the action to the words:—

"Oh, row boy, Quacheba,
Oh, row boy, Quacheba,
Diggory ding ding, Quacheba!"

To this succeeded "Aunty Sabina;" and, as a finale, her last acquisition on board, "I'm jolly Dick the lamplighter." She was then asked to dance, and was nothing loth; but she fancied that her cousin looked disapprovingly, and was, moreover, somewhat daunted by the presence of Mrs. Stewart: that lady having occasion to leave the room, however, to give directions, Constance was soon on the floor, handkerchief in hand (the pocket-

handkerchief being as much used by the Creoles of African descent, in their dances, as the scarf by the Bayaderes), going through with grace and precision all the movements of the "quelbay" and the "belay" dances.

Laura, at first, stoutly resisted all her cousin's importunities, but unable to refuse her anything long, suffered herself to be dragged out at last ; and both soon lost all restraint, and entered heart and soul into the amusement. The Italian, in particular, was so charmed with their animated gestures, and the grace of their movements, that he declared "they might make their fortunes on the boards."

We generally like those who have amused us ; and though the little Creoles were never called upon for a repetition of their performances, they were often invited into the parlour, and became great favourites with Mrs. Stewart and her sister.

Miss Gordon had taken the new comers immediately under her protection, and entered willingly on the duties of "school-mother," which, it must be admitted, are neither difficult nor onerous.

The first question asked is, "Have you any money? If you have, I will keep it for you ;"

and, to the credit of these small communities, be it known that I never heard of a "breach of trust."

The "school-mother" hears her charges their lessons previous to going up to the teacher, admonishes them on any faults of character or temper she may perceive, mends their clothes, sees to the tidying of their drawers, and interposes in any differences with their companions, to promote harmony or prevent injustice.

The duty of the "child" consists in going messages, seeking a lost glove or book, and last not least, in warming the parent nest, should they happen to be bedfellows.

No doubt many remember the reluctance with which they have rolled aside and resigned their snuggery.

The greatest difficulty Laura and Constance experienced was in the choice of "a friend" each—from the number who were ambitious of the honour.

No sooner did they appear in the schoolroom on the morning after their arrival, than they were assailed by a host of applicants. "Be my friend?" "Be my friend?" was echoed around, and

numerous hands were thrust forward to ratify a compact.

Laura at first met all offers by a flat refusal ; but Constance became flurried and perplexed, till she found herself irresistibly drawn towards a pretty brunette, who, without speaking, had slid her arm round her neck and was peering beseechingly in her face, with a pair of the softest dark eyes imaginable.

The appeal was successful, and Constance's election was at once made, though for fear of giving offence it was not openly declared, nor was it known till some days after that "the younger of the two strangers had chosen Emma Newcombe for her friend."

Laura, notwithstanding several flat refusals, chose a friend also, with whom, however, she parted in the course of a few hours in the most unceremonious manner, and *en attendant* a fresh selection, attached herself to Emma Newcombe. The three girls were thenceforward inseparable.

Of Emma Newcombe nothing further was known than that she had been at Campden House since she was five years old, and that her papa "was very rich ;" this was inferred from the

beautiful watch and other valuable trinkets she had on her person when she first came, but which had been laid aside by Mrs. Steward; it being contrary to the rules of the school to allow of any unnecessary and distinctive adornment of the person.

Emma, though a year older than Laura, looked younger.

They were not unlike in personal appearance; but no two beings could less resemble each other in their principal characteristics.

Whatever Laura thought, she said, whatever she said she fearlessly maintained, without deference to the opinions of others, and regardless of consequences. Emma was always undecided or fearful of giving offence, and would even submit to be wrongfully punished rather than "speak out."

Constance, like her friend, was naturally timid; but the indulgence of her parents had prevented the bad consequences which sometimes arise from such a temperament; and she often urged Emma to a more open line of conduct. "Tell Madame Piervaux at once," she would say, "that you have lost the French book she gave you. Let her not suppose you have lent it."

"I did not tell her, Constance, that I had lent

it. It was a supposition of her own, because I had not got it when it was wanted."

"Ah, Emma, but when she said, 'Why do you lend a book you are always wanting yourself?' you hung your head, and did not undeceive her. Show Miss Crump the rent in your frock at once; don't pin it over. When she punished you for not having attended the writing class, why did you not explain that Miss Marsham had carried away your copy-book by mistake?"

To these remonstrances Emma would reply tremblingly, "I know, dear Constance, you are quite right, and I wish I could summon the requisite courage, but I don't feel as if I could. Fancy my being reported to Mrs. Stewart, and her looking angrily at me with her terrible eyes; I really think I should die of fright."

This want of moral courage was a great defect in poor Emma, and was the principal cause of her sufferings in after life. In all other respects she was as sweet a creature as ever lived: pious, gentle, affectionate, considerate, and generous, she had a tear for every sorrow, a hand ever open to relieve the wants of others.

Unfortunately, she was an only child, and had

wanted the care of a mother. Her father loved her fondly, but was too cold and reserved in manner to encourage a timid child and invite her confidence.

Mrs. Beverley, the lady who then presided over his establishment, and gave it comfort and respectability, was the widow of a distant relative, who had left her in very bad circumstances. Emma had been at Campden House some years before this lady had accepted Mr. Newcombe's invitation to live at "the Grove."

CHAPTER VIII.

LAURA and Constance had been twelve months at Campden House, when, on one of Mrs. Beverley's visits, she asked, at Emma's request, to see "the little Creoles," and was so pleased with their pretty innocent looks and quiet manners, that she invited them for the following holidays.

Mrs. Stewart demurred at first to her request, on the plea that she had no time to communicate with Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt; but Miss Amiel reminded her sister "that the girls had been put entirely under their care, and that there being no other inmates of the Grove beside Mr. Newcombe Mrs. Beverley, and Emma, who was their school-fellow, there could be no reasonable objection to their accepting the proffered kindness."

Mr. Newcombe awed the girls a little at first,

but he was so attentive to their wants, so willing to promote their pleasures, that ere a week had expired they were quite at home with him.

Mrs. Beverley had often regretted the want of companionship for Emma, and was delighted to have met with girls who were so agreeable to her, and so eligible in every respect. She had on several occasions invited the children of neighbours to spend a day, but Emma never appeared to take any pleasure in their company; on the contrary, on those occasions she had always been unusually shy and reserved.

As to Laura and her cousin, they were overjoyed to regain the free use of their limbs, and to roam about in the open air. They were fond of accompanying Mrs. Beverley to the hothouse, and she was gratified by their admiration of her tropical plants, and surprised at their knowledge of botany; even the old gardener declared he had got many useful hints from the "young missuses."

How unbounded was their joy at seeing a plantain-tree, with its broad, pendant, shiny leaves; and how they jumped about in ecstasies of delight, with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes,

on recognising among the parasites the *Gongora Stanopea* and the *Oncidium lancianum*.

"Laura, Laura," exclaimed Constance, clapping her hands, "look at the beautiful lancianum."

"Don't you remember the day we spent together with dear papa in the woods?"

"How delighted he was when he discovered it, and what difficulty he had in persuading Jimbo to climb for it!"

"I am sure I don't wonder, for it was frightful to watch him getting up that high tree; he looked no bigger than a monkey at the top."

The aptness of the comparison set the light-hearted young creatures laughing heartily.

When the trio were by themselves, the conversation naturally often turned on the West Indies. It was the home of two of the party, and in their eyes a terrestrial paradise, and its wonders and beauties were often unconsciously exaggerated.

"Do you know," said Emma, one evening, after they had been uncommonly animated on the subject, "that it has come into my mind several times lately, that I have been in the West Indies. I am almost sure that there was once a

dark woman who took care of me, and that I have tasted sugar-canes. I will ask papa to-morrow."

And then they danced about and hugged and kissed each other.

The next day, when they were in the garden, Emma ran up to her papa, and inquired "if they had not been in the West Indies?"

Mr. Newcombe was at the moment tying up the overloaded branch of a favourite apple-tree, and appeared not to have heard; but on the question being repeated, he answered without turning round—

"My dear child, Queen Mab seems to have been paying you a visit; she puts strange vagaries into people's heads at times."

Emma waited a few seconds in the hopes he would say something more, but he went on with his work, not seeming to heed her presence, and she returned to her young companions much disappointed.

"How odd!" thought she; "but no doubt papa was right; I must have dreamt it."

In the evening, Mr. Newcombe was unusually silent and distraught, and once he drew Emma towards him, placed her on his knee, and ten-

derly stroked her hair. Though doatingly fond of his child, he was rarely so demonstrative, and on retiring for the night she noticed it.

"I wonder what was the matter with papa," she said, "he looked so sad and out of spirits."

"Stuff and nonsense!" exclaimed Laura; "you are always fancying something or other, and fidgeting yourself without reason. I only observed that he looked uncommonly dull and sleepy."

"Well, I daresay you are right," replied Emma, who never liked to differ from anyone; and there the conversation dropped.

The evenings at the Grove were generally devoted to music, of which Mr. Newcombe was very fond.

Constance had already a voice of great richness and compass, and was able to accompany herself, which, generally speaking, is an advantage. She and Emma sang very agreeably together on ordinary occasions; but the timidity of the latter was a great impediment to her acquitting herself well before strangers, and she often broke down, to the annoyance of her father, whilst Laura, who had far less musical talent than either, always appeared to most advantage.

"How I envy you your self-possession, Laura," Emma would say. "If you make a blunder, you don't seem to mind it a bit, but go on just as if nothing had happened."

"'Tis much the best way," Laura would reply, laughingly; "half the company don't listen, and the few that do are probably no judges. If they were, I wouldn't much care. I play only to please Mr. Newcombe, whom I love, and he knows I do my best."

The trio had returned to school after a vacation in which they had been the happiest of the happy, when an incident occurred which interrupted for a while all their enjoyments, and threw a dark shade, alas! over poor Emma's future existence.

It was the hour of recreation for the scholars, and they were all out on the terrace, with the exception of Emma Newcombe, who had been summoned to a visitor. Constance had been sent into the house on an errand by one of the teachers, and returned looking very red, and in a state of great agitation.

"What is the matter?" inquired her cousin.

"Oh, Laura, I scarcely know; but I will tell you what I have seen. As I was passing by the

parlour, I heard a scream, and thinking some one had fallen and hurt herself, I popped my head in at the open window, and there was dear Emma fainting in the arms of an old fat dark woman, who was hugging her up, and calling her 'My child, my child !' She was so ugly I shuddered as I looked at her. I was just going to get in and run to Emma's assistance, when Mrs. Stewart saw me, and, closing the window as she spoke, desired me in a sharp tone 'to join my young companions.'"

"What could that horrid woman mean by calling our dear Emma her child?"

"She may be an old family servant. Emma, you know, said once or twice that she had a faint remembrance of a dark nurse. Strange, though, that Mr. Newcombe never spoke to any of us about the West Indies."

"Perhaps he met with misfortunes there which made him wish to forget the place."

"There must be some reason for his silence, certainly," said Laura, "and that is the most natural one."

"I hope the old woman was not the bearer of bad news to our dear Emma. Something must have disturbed her greatly to make her faint."

"Surprise alone might have had that effect; she has been often obliged to leave church on that account; and last holidays, you may remember, Constance, that she went quite into a swoon on seeing that handsome young artillery officer, Colonel Lindsay, thrown from his horse."

On returning to the house, they passed under the parlour window; the sash had been thrown up again, and the room was vacant.

"What had become of their friend?"

Their eyes wandered in all directions in search of her, but she was nowhere to be seen. It was evident she had not been in the schoolroom: her embroidery-frame remained in the same place, the work uncovered, and her lesson-book was open beside it, at the page she had been learning when sent for.

Laura and Constance exchanged looks of surprise and consternation.

Where could Emma be? Had she been spirited away by fairies, they could not have been more distressed. It was long that night ere they slept.

Not being allowed to interrogate their superiors, when Miss Amiel appeared the following morning

in the school, the girls merely turned their eyes timidly towards her.

The young are in general pretty good physiognomists. The sad and thoughtful expression of that lady's countenance was by no means reassuring, and they communicated their fears to each other.

That day passed heavily enough with the cousins.

Miss Amiel's bedroom opened on a passage along which the girls had to pass in retiring for the night to the dormitories. A piece of furniture which had been put outside the door was in the way, and had to be moved ere they could proceed. During the few seconds they were waiting, Mrs. Stewart came out of her sister's room, and Laura heard her say, "Poor child, a sound night's rest will do her much good;" and Miss Amiel answer, in her gentle tones, "I fear she will not get *that*, nor would it afford more than a temporary relief to her sufferings."

Their poor dear Emma was then ill or unhappy. Oh that they could be allowed to see her and comfort her! but they dared not ask.

The third day their anxiety was increased;

James was ill. The young ladies were not allowed to take their accustomed exercise in the garden walk which passed under the adjoining apartment.

“Dr. Lesson had recommended that Miss Newcombe should be kept very quiet.”

They were allowed the mere indulgence of walking in a young paragonian rather prematurely called the ‘wood.’

The wall which enclosed the premises in that direction was as low as it admit a partial view of passing carriages and even of the dress and business of pedestrians: and such inquiries were always given that “the young ladies should not be allowed to linger or look over the wall.”

Laure and Constance did not seek the pleasures of their young companions, their energies were otherwise engaged.

No opportunity offered of speaking that day to Miss Ardel, and they at last brought them of addressing themselves to the good-natured housemaid, Molly.

“Lackadaisy, miss, it’s little enough I knows. All I can tell you for sartin is, that the poor young lady is ailing, and almost beside herself,

sighing and moaning most piteously; and her eyes are swollen like, as it were, out of her head!"

How shocked they felt. Laura determined that she would speak the next day to Miss Amiel.

"She knows, Constance, how much we love Emma, and it is cruel to keep us so long in suspense about her."

The answer to Laura's inquiries was not very satisfactory: it increased rather than diminished anxiety.

"Poor child!" Miss Amiel replied, "she is, I am sorry to say, far from well; and I have written to Mr. Newcombe: he will be here to-day or to-morrow, to take Emma away. She has been looking languid for some time, and requires both change of air and change of scene."

In the course of the day it was known through Molly, that Mr. Newcombe had arrived, but what passed between him and his daughter, and why the dark woman's visit produced such an effect, remained a secret to our heroines, and a puzzle for many a day.

Immediate preparations were set about for

Emma was ill. The young ladies were to take their accustomed exercise walk which passed under the monuments.

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They were allowed the ring in a young plan called the "wood."

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Laura Newcombe looking pale and anxious
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Others were shocked they were at the alteration a few
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her soft black eyes were dim and lustreless, and
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Scarce able to rise, she extended her arms
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Emma's removal : her drawers were emptied, and Laura and Constance directed to collect and identify her books. Whilst so engaged their hearts were full, but they had no time for an interchange of words. Every now and then they paused for a second to listen to footsteps in the direction of Miss Amiel's apartment, and on every turn of the handle of the lock they started, hoping to be sent for.

At last Constance's tears began to flow.

"Surely," she said, "Emma would not go away without bidding us adieu !"

The last half hour had seemed interminable.

A summons came at last, and with beating hearts they hastened to the parlour, where they found Mr. Newcombe looking pale and anxious, and Emma equipped for a journey.

How shocked they were at the alteration a few days had made in her appearance. Her clear brown complexion had changed to a sickly yellow, her soft black eyes were dim and lustreless, and the long dark lashes seemed to weigh down the drooping lids.

Scarce able to rise, she extended her arms towards her friends, and clasped them in a fond

embrace. She tried to speak, but the words died on her pale and trembling lips, and leaning back in her chair she closed her eyes and sobbed convulsively.

Mr. Newcombe and Miss Amiel turned aside to hide the tears which rose unbidden to their eyes. Mr. Newcombe was the first to recover his self-possession.

"This is too much for you, my child," he said; and putting his arm round her waist, he led her unresistingly to the carriage. He then returned, and pressed Miss Amiel gratefully by the hand; his young favourites he kissed tenderly on the forehead, and said with emotion, "God grant us a happy meeting again! You shall hear from Emma soon."

As the door closed, Miss Amiel gently but fervently ejaculated a blessing on "the poor stricken lamb." She then, with her accustomed kindness and consideration, gave the cousins, who were both in tears, a holiday for the remainder of the day, with permission to ramble about the reserved garden.

A profusion of flowers scented the air, full ripe apricots stood out against the wall, and gaudy

butterflies flitted around, without attracting even a passing glance from the girls, as they sauntered listlessly along.

This was the first cloud that had passed over the happiness of the schoolfellows.

It was many weeks ere any tidings were heard of Mr. Newcombe or his daughter. At last came a letter from the former to Miss Amiel (which she kept to herself), enclosing a few lines to Laura from Mrs. Beverley. It was full of affectionate assurances towards her and Constance, and regrets at not having been able to see them previous to the departure of the family for Madeira. She had had a good many preparations to make, she said, and Emma had required so much attention. "Her health was, indeed, very delicate!"

CHAPTER IX.

IT is now time to return to Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt.

Four years had elapsed since they parted with the girls. The first had been the hardest to get through ; but reason at last asserted its influence. Mrs. Beverley had kindly opened a correspondence with Mrs. Mordaunt, and kept her *au courant* of all the dear girls' sayings and doings whilst with her ; and Mrs. Stewart and Miss Amiel gave most flattering accounts of the progress their charges were making in their studies, describing them at the same time as docile, affectionate, and lady-like, equally lovely and loveable in their different ways. What more could be desired ? Would they not be repaid for the sacrifice they had made in submitting to a separation ? Mr. Mordaunt had at last succeeded in meeting with a manager who

went hand in hand with him in his philanthropic views, and consulted him so often as to the management of the estate, that time had ceased to hang heavy on his hands. His ambition, though not extinct, lay dormant, neither disturbing his own peace of mind nor that of others; and Mrs. Mordaunt fondly hoped that the fabric of her happiness was at length firmly consolidated. A letter from an absent relative to Mr. Mordaunt shook it, alas ! to its very foundation.

To account for the effect of this missive I must enter into a few family details hitherto omitted.

At the time that Charles Mordaunt's father went out to the West Indies, his family being mixed up with the political troubles of the day, had emigrated also, and settled in America. His elder sister, and her husband, Mr. Forbes, did not long survive their expatriation; though it was shared by another sister, Mrs. Fraser, and her three daughters. The latter had taken up their abode in New York, and it was from Mrs. Fraser Mordaunt heard. She informed him that she had a diagram of the large tract of land granted by the Crown to their common ancestor, the last

Earl of — ; that Aminta, her only unmarried daughter, had carefully preserved all family papers and letters of importance, and urged him most strongly to go over without delay, and assert his rights ; a large portion of the land having (she was informed) been taken possession of, and put into cultivation by a class of settlers not over-scrupulous as to title.

Mordaunt felt that the time for action had at length arrived, and was greatly disturbed. What sacrifices would he not be called on to make himself, and to impose on those he fondly loved ; and how uncertain might be his success.

In the first place, he would be compelled to undertake a voyage to Scotland, to ascertain if any other claimant to the title and estates had started up since his father's caveat had been entered in the Herald's Office of Scotland. The next, to proceed to America, to look over the papers and documents in Mrs. Fraser's possession, and himself judge of their nature and importance. To carry out these objects, and prosecute his claim without loss of time, he must obtain the necessary funds from his merchant in London ; and then, what was best to be done about his wife and child ? He

remained for nearly an hour in a state of great perplexity ; at last he decided on being guided by his wife, and after a vain effort at self-command entered her apartment, and put the letter into her hand without speaking.

Mrs. Mordaunt raised her eyes to her husband's face. She had been too long accustomed to read every feeling of his heart in his expressive countenance not to perceive, at a glance, that there was something amiss, and she opened the letter with fear and trembling. Had she read her death-warrant, she could not have been more appalled.

Mordaunt saw how deeply she was affected, and turned aside to conceal his own agitation.

Mrs. Mordaunt was the first to break silence.

"Charles," she said, "you must go ; your future interests require this present sacrifice on our parts."

"Go, Rosa, and leave you behind ! Will you not accompany me ?"

The blood rushed to Mrs. Mordaunt's face, and tears filled her eyes.

"Alas ! dear Charles," she replied, "you know the invincible dread I have ever had of the sea ; yet would I strive to overcome it for your sake, did

I not fear for our boy the effects of a voyage to the northward so soon after an attack of measles ; and then we should so materially increase your expenses. I am so helpless on board ship, we should be under the necessity of taking a nurse."

Mordaunt admitted, though reluctantly, the weight of his wife's arguments. He could not blind himself to the fact that his boy was a tender plant, and would need careful rearing ; and that his funds were in no flourishing condition. Though sugars, at the time, bore a remunerative price, he had added so considerably to the strength of the estate since it came into his hands, and erected so many new and substantial buildings, that at the end of each year but a small balance in his favour had remained in his merchant's hands.

Mrs. Mordaunt had at first seen with some anxiety the continual outlay going on, but her husband's mind seemed so much more at ease than formerly, that she persuaded herself sufficient would eventually be left for the indulgence of all simple rational pleasures, and for the maintenance of their rising family in comfort and independence. She had not anticipated the present crisis, and

trembled as she thought of the immense stake her husband was about to play; yet she could not bring herself to embarrass him by her scruples, or thwart what she conceived to be his wishes. Truly has it been said, "*L'homme change à tout instant.*" Could she have read what was passing in her husband's mind, she would have been less reserved.

Mordaunt, whose life for many years had been one long fevered dream of ambition, set about the preparations and arrangements which were to bring him nearer to the fruition of his hopes, slowly and almost reluctantly. The home once so underrated had become endeared to him by the fondest recollections. All in the present was real and substantial—how visionary and uncertain the future! The decisive moment came at last. One cheering idea alone presented itself to the sorrowing pair, as they lingered in a last embrace—that of the unexpected happiness in store for their dear girls.

During the voyage, Mordaunt was thoughtful and silent. Not even the near approach to the ever-verdant Isle of Wight, which all on board gazed on with eager, devouring eyes, awakened a

throb of gladness at his heart. The fields were as green, the hedges as trim, the houses as neat, the flowers as bright, his countrywomen as blooming, as ever ! He was forced to acknowledge that he alone was changed. On a sign from the captain to let go the anchor, the seaman stuck a quid in his cheek, and, with a twitch at his trousers, prepared to obey, whilst a majority of the passengers rushed below to fee the stewardess, or put the last finishing-touch to their toilets. Some few there were, perhaps, who, on hearing well-remembered voices, hastened their retreat to hide from unconcerned spectators the meeting with loved friends from whom they had been long separated. All were in as much hurry to depart as if their lives depended on a moment's delay.

Whilst these scenes were passing around, Mordaunt hung over the vessel's side, as if in observation of outward objects, but his thoughts were busy within.

Where were the friends, protectors, and companions of his youth ? How few remained to welcome him. Of the former, the majority had gone to their eternal rest, those who survived were voluntary exiles : of the latter class, he knew that

many had emigrated to distant lands in the expectation, no doubt, of rising rapidly to wealth and distinction by some (even to themselves undefined) speculation or discovery.

The wisest were those, perhaps, who had remained at home, satisfied to make their way by ordinary means. Not a few rejoiced in advantages derived from their ancestors. Would these not look with indifference, perhaps with loathing, at the pale, dispirited slave-owner?

A burning blush rose to Mordaunt's very temples at the thought, but he hemmed away a sigh as he turned to salute courteously his fellow travellers. As soon as the cabin was clear, he locked his trunks, with the help of the now disengaged steward, and taking merely a carpet-bag with him, left the rest of his luggage to be sent after him to the Adelphi Hotel, at that time the favourite resort of West Indians.

As Mr. Mordaunt passed through Kensington gravel-pits, and neared the avenue to Campden House, his emotions became almost painful.

Mrs. Stewart had had no notice of his arrival, and Laura and Constance were taking their dancing-lesson when he was announced.

The feelings of the girls it would be vain to attempt to describe. As they rushed into Mr. Mordaunt's arms, their eyes sparkling and their cheeks flushed with exercise and excitement, he thought that he had never beheld any beings half so lovely.

In the fresh joyous creature before him, he could scarce recognise his Constance, the pale timid child from whom he had parted so few years back ; and Laura, though less changed, was equally improved in manner and appearance, and both were considerably grown.

Why did they peruse his face so earnestly ? Time, like a wet sponge, soon wipes out all identity of form and feature from the memory of childhood, and in this instance fancy had installed herself on the throne of memory.

Laura confessed, with her usual frankness, that she had figured to herself "uncle a handsome young man," and Constance thought "papa had been quite another sort of person."

These avowals, which would have created a painful sensation if made to a third person, mattered little when the parties stood face to face, linked hand in hand ; and Mr. Mordaunt said,

laughingly, as he imprinted a kiss on each of their fair faces, "I hope, dear Laura, you will not love me less for not coming up to your expectations; and that my little Constance will love her papa quite as well as that 'other sort of person' she suffered to usurp his place."

Whilst the girls were engaged making a few preparations for accompanying him to the hotel, Mr. Mordaunt took the opportunity to thank Mrs. Stewart and Miss Amiel for the great care they had taken of their charges. He listened with much satisfaction to these ladies' praises of them, and observed with pleasure the affection which seemed to exist between the parties.

On taking leave, Constance even ventured to raise her rosy lips to be kissed by the formidable Mrs. Stewart.

Seated in the carriage, how many questions they had to ask about dear mamma, darling baby, Aunt Latour, the Everetts, their favourite Portia, and even Jimbo!

It would have been nearly impossible to answer their questions categorically, from the incoherent manner in which they were put, and the variety

of objects they embraced. There were inquiries about all the old grannies on the estate, their cats and dogs—in short, about things animate and inanimate to which Mr. Mordaunt's knowledge did not extend, and of which the girls themselves had but imperfect recollections.

The wonderful city was traversed by the happy trio without attracting a single glance or eliciting an observation, so engrossed were they by their feelings.

Mordaunt resolved not to think of business whilst the girls were with him, and his spirits revived under the cheering influence of their presence. If a cloud now and then crossed his brow at recollection of his absent wife and child, it was quickly dispelled.

He took them to see those objects in London which he considered most likely to instruct, interest, and amuse at the same time.

As he walked along the crowded streets, and through the parks, with one hanging on each arm, he fancied every eye turned in admiration on their blooming faces, whilst they looked as if they would have said to all the young whom they met, "This is our papa. Have you a papa? And is he as

kind and handsome as ours?" Happy days ! never to be forgotten.

At the end of a week, Laura and Constance returned reluctantly to school, and Mordaunt set out, with a heavy heart, for Scotland. His stay was short, for he was a stranger in his native land, and having ascertained that his father's caveat was the last, in fact the only one, which had been entered, there was no motive for delay.

On his return to London, his first step was to negotiate a loan with his merchant for the sums he might require from time to time in the prosecution of his claim to the title and to the benefit of the transatlantic grant.

To his infinite annoyance, these gentlemen refused the advance unless under the guarantee of a mortgage executed by Mrs. Mordaunt and himself.

Mordaunt knew that the slightest expression of his wishes would ensure his wife's compliance with such an arrangement, but he felt great reluctance to ask of her such a concession of her rights, when he was about to embark on a perilous voyage, and invest in such a lottery as a lawsuit. Almost he repented him of his decision, but he felt that there

was great danger in delay. Happy would it have been for himself, and for all concerned, had he even then retraced his steps.

In no enviable state of mind Mr. Mordaunt took leave of the girls, and often in after years did they revert to the sad expression of his countenance and the fervour of his embraces.

Whilst Mr. Mordaunt is *en route* for America, we will take a peep at his home.

CHAPTER X.

How anxiously did Mrs. Mordaunt watch every sail that passed at the expiration of the time when she might expect to hear from her husband. "Oh, why did he go on this distant enterprise?" she exclaimed aloud, scarce knowing that she did so. "Were we not happy, and what more can be desired? Neither his poor boy nor I will ever live to enjoy wealth and distinction, and of what value will they be to him, unshared by those whom he so fondly loves?"

So strong was this conviction in Mrs. Mordaunt's mind, that the face of the unconscious boy was often wetted with her tears. Her presentiments of evil were not groundless. The father and son were not destined to meet again on earth.

On Mr. Mordaunt's arrival at New York, he had some difficulty in finding the residence of his

Streets had been laid out,
res, churches, and public
k was as yet a city in

u were mostly of wood, stood
u other in the centre of their own
u embowered in trees, and were not
red. He wandered about for some hours
this labyrinth without success, till he engaged a
guide. With a fluttering heart he rang at the
outer gate of a pretty-looking villa residence, and
sent in his card.

The alacrity of the grey-headed butler in return-
ing and marshalling the way, indicated a favour-
able reception from his mistress. This class of
persons are the barometers by which the feelings
of those whom they serve may be tested.

As Mr. Mordaunt entered the saloon, an elderly
lady, of most dignified appearance, rose from her
chair and advanced with extended hands to meet
him. Her manner appeared at first calm and
collected, but the tears which stood in her eyes,
the tremor of her voice, and her long, tender em-
brace, showed the nature and depth of her feelings.

Putting on her spectacles, she led him towards


a window, and for a few seconds gazed fondly and earnestly in his face. "Alas!" she said, "you are even more like my ever lamented brother than I had been led to expect."

Mrs. Fraser's family consisted of three daughters. The eldest, married to a Colonel Sinclair, had accompanied her husband to England. The youngest was also married, and the mother of two children, a boy and a girl. Her husband, Mr. Corbin, was a quiet gentlemanly man who lived on his own property, and farmed it. The second daughter, Aminta by name, was a great invalid. She had long renounced all matrimonial projects, and lived happily with her mother, to whom she was in turn nurse, friend, and companion. On her had devolved the care of the family records and papers. She was, in fact, the only one, except Mrs. Fraser, who attached any importance to their preservation. Mrs. Sinclair, the eldest daughter, was certainly not indifferent to the pride of ancestry, but she looked on the restoration of her family to their rights as chimerical, and often expressed regret that Aminta should give herself so much trouble to preserve mementoes of past greatness, of so little interest to others, and which, as

regarded themselves, could serve no other purpose than that of keeping alive heartburnings and making them discontented with their lot.

As to her lively sister, Mrs. Corbin, she rarely thought about the matter at all. When she did, it was to wonder what pleasure her mother and Aminta could have in keeping old battered helmets and rusty swords, and in poring over musty papers which were nearly illegible. The damask with the family arms interwoven "was certainly very handsome. Why not use it?" In fact, she was capable of making it into pinafores for missy, and cutting up the deeds and records into kites for the young Yankee.

Aminta was out for a drive when Mordaunt arrived. She was surprised and delighted to hear of his arrival, and welcomed him as a loved relation, a long-expected guest. The only other members of his family Mordaunt had ever known were his aunt and uncle Forbes, who had long paid the debt of nature. His heart warmed towards these his newly found relatives. They talked together of the past and of the future, and of those in whom they were mutually interested. Before separating for the night, Mrs. Fraser drew from the



drawer of a sofa-table likenesses of her charming daughters, and put them into Mordaunt's hands, descanting, as she did so, on their amiable qualities.

Mordaunt had unfortunately no likeness of his wife, but he had furnished himself ere he left England with those of his loved Constance and of his scarcely less loved Laura.

Aminta, after looking at them for some time in fondness and admiration, begged as a favour to be allowed to take them with her to her room, that by contemplating them more leisurely she might be better able to realize to herself the originals.

"What queen-like beauty !" she exclaimed, gazing on the portrait of Laura. She then added in a softer voice, as she turned to that of Constance, "A pair of wings would be no inappropriate finish to such a face and figure."

"And yet," said Mordaunt, "her habitual expression is more that of a bright merry sprite than that of a serious contemplative being ; but, poor child," and a cloud passed over his countenance, "she knew when she sat for that likeness it was to be her father's travelling companion."

Mordaunt's emotion did not pass unobserved by the gentle Aminta.

"God bless you, dear cousin!" she said, as she gave him her hand; "let us hope that brighter days are in store for you and your loved ones. To-morrow I will introduce you to my sanctum sanctorum. I think you will find enough there to occupy and interest you for some days. I have long been an invalid, and necessarily confined to the house, and mamma has fitted up a small sitting-room adjoining my bed-room, not only to save me the fatigue of going up and down stairs continually, but that I may groan and lament me without disturbing or being disturbed by those who are blessed with better health than I am."

Though Mrs. Fraser had been up unusually late, she rose at an early hour the following morning, and whilst breakfast was preparing, invited her nephew to a turn round the lawn, on which the breakfast-room opened.

It was evident to Mordaunt that she shared his father's taste for flowers. In the borders was a collection of rare plants, European and tropical, many of the former the offspring of English science and culture, which she had succeeded in bringing to perfection, contrary to the opinion of

several American florists. Of these the old lady was not a little proud.

"You see," she said, 'pointing to them triumphantly, "that though an alien in body I am not so in mind."

Aminta, contrary to custom, presided at breakfast, and soon after led the way to her boudoir, followed by Mr. Mordaunt, who gave his arm to his aunt.

The apartment, though small, was comfortable and airy, and bore evidences of the taste and refinement of its fair occupant.


Vases with flowers stood on marble consoles, the under compartments of which were filled with well-chosen books in different languages, whilst the walls were literally covered with paintings, many of them done by Aminta herself, in a masterly style.

A small but exquisitely inlaid cabinet containing her "treasures," occupied the space fronting the fireplace. Over this hung a youthful likeness of the Pretender ; opposite, was one of the lovely, unfortunate, and maligned Mary Queen of Scots, taken before her marriage with the Dauphin of France.

There were portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Fraser, and their respective families. Amongst the most interesting to Mordaunt were those of his father and mother taken when he was a boy. The latter he scarce remembered. She had not been able to bear up long against her altered circumstances. In the distance was their ancestral castle.

Mordaunt stood some minutes in silent contemplation of the picture. His old enemy, ambition, had again taken full possession of him. Like Lear, he had become the hero of an ideal world. Seated on a heap of straw, the aged monarch is made to exclaim, "Ay, every inch a king!" Mordaunt at that moment felt himself "every inch a peer;" and so thought the gentle Aminta as she followed him with her eyes.

The deep attention Mordaunt brought to the consideration of every paper was extremely gratifying to Mrs. Fraser and her daughter, and the latter often congratulated herself during his stay, on the time and care she had bestowed on documents so important to the establishment of his claims; yet the final adjustment would be an expensive and difficult process. Aminta deserved the highest praise for the preservation and judicious



arrangement of every document likely to be of use.

There was a diagram which, with attested copies of several deeds, was carefully rolled up and placed in a tin case. Then there were letters from different members of the family, and many from leading characters of the day on the political events which at the time agitated the country, extremely curious, developing as they did the peculiar views and secret springs of action of many well-known and distinguished individuals. These had been laid open, numbered, and headed with reference to their contents, in a succinct and lucid manner. Several letters from Mr. Mordaunt's father, written whilst yet he sat on his knee or hung about his neck, affected him deeply; they were links of a chain binding the past with the present, and drawing him nearer to his aunt and cousin.


These could not fail to observe his emotion, and their hearts warmed more than ever to one so affectionate and genial in his nature, and so calculated to gratify their pride and their ambition.

Several days were spent consecutively in Aminta's boudoir, and Mordaunt's interest in-

creased rather than diminished. Each object had some tradition attached to it. There was a pen, curiously set, with which had been written the poem which procured for the author the honour of knighthood; the sword wielded by a renowned general of their line; a helmet perforated by balls, proving the danger incurred by another in defence of his prince. Mordaunt's appreciation of the collection amply repaid Aminta for the time she had bestowed on it.

The letters and deeds left no doubt on Mordaunt's mind as to his being the rightful heir to the last earl; and all that remained for him now to do was to establish his claim to the title, and to ascertain the position, extent, and boundaries of the land granted to his ancestor. For this he awaited the return of Mr. Square, a surveyor, who had been particularly recommended to him.

Mrs. Fraser was naturally desirous he should make the acquaintance of her youngest daughter, and, with the hospitality of the olden time, scarce considered her welcome complete unless she gave a party in his honour. But Mrs. Corbin lived in a distant province, and that blessed invention, the locomotive, being then unknown, they found, on



talking the matter over, that it would be several weeks ere she could arrive ; and Mordaunt assured his aunt that he would infinitely prefer a quiet evening in her society and Aminta's to the most brilliant fête that could be offered him. "It would be certainly months, perhaps years, ere they met again ; besides which, he confessed to having become too home-sick to enjoy the company of strangers." Seated by an open balcony filled with flowers, and looking out into the garden, the last days of his stay with his aunt and cousin were spent in reading aloud to them passages from his favourite authors, or in conversing about those in whom they felt a mutual interest.

Aminta was surprised to hear from Mordaunt's own lips how much his happiness had been for many years embittered by ambition, and by his extreme sensitiveness to the opinion of the world in regard to the nature of his property.

She had led so secluded a life that she could not understand the feelings of men or women of the world. She was content with her lot, and the estimation in which she was held by her own family, her friends and acquaintances.

"I wonder, dear cousin," she said, "that you

should have felt these matters so deeply. You have always held the position of a gentleman, have been blessed with health, independence, and a charming family ; and the consciousness of having performed your duty to your helpless fellow-creatures like a humane man and a Christian, ought to have supported you against unjust aspersions.

Mordaunt paused ere he replied. "You are right, Aminta ; your plain good sense has gone far towards convincing me of my folly, but the feelings which have so marred my past happiness grew with my youth, and so rarely appeared on the surface that they were never combated, as they might have been, by those for whom I had any respect. Even my good friend Everett had merely an occasional glimpse of the inward man, but I might have profited by his example. However, Aminta, I mean to turn over a new leaf."

Before they separated for the night, Mordaunt gladdened the heart of his affectionate relatives by declaring his intention, whether successful or unsuccessful, to bring over his family for a few years, to perfect the acquaintance so happily commenced on his part. "'Thank God ! I have," he said, at

present, a manager of intelligence, probity, and humanity; and I would make it worth his while to remain on the property by giving him a share in it."

"But what would become of Ariba and Portia?" inquired Aminta. "You have greatly interested me in their favour."

Mordaunt smiled. "The former," he replied, "will probably be, in a few years, a proprietor himself in a small way. I manumitted him and my domestic servants many months ago; and my wife wrote me, just before I left England, that he had rented a piece of land on one of the little islands called the 'Keys,' where he has commenced a trade in turtle. He keeps a canoe, and had sent her over a fine specimen as a present. Portia would, I am sure, never leave us, nor should we be disposed to part with her."

The day after this conversation, Mordaunt received the Holy Communion with his relatives; and the surveyor for whom he had waited having arrived at New York, they set out together on their disastrous expedition, furnished, at Mrs. Fraser's suggestion, with antidotes to the bite of venomous reptiles, palliatives for mosquito

bites, and remedies against fever and ague, that inveterate enemy to man in the backwoods of America.

For a few days all went well. Mordaunt was enthusiastic in his admiration of the gigantic growth of the trees, the profusion of gaudy creepers, the novelty and variety of the orchidaceous plants; and enjoyed beyond measure the almost unnatural coolness pervading particular spots on the hottest days.

Mr. Square was a man of great experience, and of much local knowledge. He pointed out to Mordaunt the probable boundaries of the late earl's grant, and gave him some valuable information, which, however, only showed the difficulties there would be in the way of an amicable settlement of his claims, should they be established. Some of the lands not resumed by the Crown had been sold by the late earl, and a part was cultivated by squatters, who had, in many instances, built such substantial dwelling-houses, that it was evident they considered themselves permanent settlers. To eject these would be a troublesome and expensive job, and as there yet remained a sufficiency of land to content one of



the largest proprietors of Europe, Mordaunt instructed Mr. Square, in the event of his being employed, to be careful, in the discharge of his duties, not to disturb or disquiet any one.

They were on their return to New York when Mr. Mordaunt, who had been unaccustomed to bodily fatigue and exposure to the night air, complained of lassitude, and decided on bivouacking for a day in one of those cool, green, and deceptive spots before mentioned as so often to be met with in the primeval forests of America.

Mr. Square, who had dearly bought his experience, tried, but without success, to dissuade him from doing so. He then pressed on him a cigar, as indeed he had several times done before, knowing tobacco to be the best preservative against malaria, but Mordaunt's inveterate dislike to "the weed" was too strong to be overcome.

It is surmised that the poison had already begun to work, for early the following morning a glassy coldness pervaded his limbs, whilst the pulse was at 120, and he was quite delirious.

The distress and consternation of the poor surveyor was extreme, and one of the porters who had accompanied them was despatched in all

the nearest settlement for medical advice
assistance.

It came, after the delay of some hours, alas, too
late to save !

Happily, Mordaunt was not of the number of those who make the care of their souls a secondary consideration, and trust to a death-bed repentance. He was unconscious of his danger, and had become insensible long before the vital spark had fled.

With the exception of the puny boy left in the island of St. Vincent, Mordaunt was the last male representative of his line.

What a lesson does his death at such a moment read to those who, like him, shut their eyes to all the good gifts a merciful Creator bestows on them, and seek with avidity things difficult of attainment, evanescent at the best, and often worthless in fruition.

It was with a heavy heart that the worthy surveyor retraced his steps to the capital.

Poor Mrs. Fraser was overwhelmed with grief when the sad tidings reached her, and in an agony of mind reproached herself bitterly for having encouraged Mordaunt's coming to America,

whilst the gentle Aminta was too deeply affected to be able to comfort her mother.

The few weeks spent in the society of her handsome, intellectual cousin had been to the solitary invalid the most pleasurable of her existence ; and had he not promised to bring his family over and to be always near them ? Yet she was too unselfish not to strive against such vain regrets. The effort was, indeed, most difficult, but she felt that it was her duty to try and recall every look and word of the dear departed which might prove consolatory to those who loved him with a love greater than her own.

On a table in her apartment lay a letter Mordaunt had left to be forwarded to his wife by the first opportunity ; and it was decided between Mrs. Fraser and herself, to send it off direct by a vessel about to sail, and to write, at the same time, to Mrs. Everett, of whom poor Mordaunt had always spoken as their nearest neighbour and best friend, giving her an account of all the sad particulars from first to last, and entreating her good offices to prepare her friend for the heavy affliction which had fallen on her.

Aminta's letter contained the comforting assu-

rance that, even in the midst of the conflict of life, Mordaunt had been strict in the performance of his religious duties : and often has his afflicted widow been heard to murmur, in the still watches of the night, "Blessed are they who die in the Lord."

matter of life or death? In the torture of the body, preliminary minor punishments, when prolonged, do but exhaust that strength which might support the victim under a severer infliction; and the same reasoning seems to me to hold good in regard to mental suffering.

Mrs. Latour hastened to her niece as soon as the afflicting news reached her, and her presence was of service to Mrs. Mordaunt in more ways than one. It imposed on her the necessity of providing for her comfort.

As soon as her strength would permit, she rose from her bed and resumed her ordinary duties. All who came to testify their sympathy were gratefully received. No murmur broke from her lips, nor was her mourning even made up in a hurry; yet no one who beheld her blanched cheek and feeble step could call her "a strong-minded woman;" a compliment, by the way, as often paid to the volatile and heartless as to those who, from principle and a submission to the Divine Will, keep their feelings in subjection that they may better discharge their duties to the living.

In due time the sad intelligence reached England.

Laura and Constance could scarce, at first, realize the fact. It seemed to them impossible that the loved being with whom they had so recently talked and walked, and in whose warm embrace they had been pressed, was indeed no more !

When convinced that it was so, their grief became so great and touching as to awaken the sympathy of every one. Mrs. Stewart and Miss Amiel, on whom Mr. Mordaunt had made a most favourable impression, felt sincerely for their young charges. They could not help seeing clearly, in looking through the long vista of years, the magnitude of the loss sustained by their young charges.

During the day the soothing attentions and caresses of their companions kept Laura and Constance from dwelling exclusively on their loss ; but at night, when there were no outward objects to divert the thoughts from flowing in their natural channel, recollections of their father's indulgent love so overcame them, that their young companions were awoke by their sobs. " They felt," they said, " as if they could never more be happy."

The beauty of the young Creoles was too re-

markable to have escaped the notice of the company assembled at Campden House on dancing days, then called "publics;" and as soon as their misfortune became known, several invitations were sent for them "to be allowed to spend some days out."

These were all courteously declined.

Mrs. Stewart and Miss Amiel were no encouragers of morbid sensibility, but they deprecated the well-meant but injudicious custom of turning a season of sorrow into one of pleasurable remembrances also, and thereby neutralizing the good effects which might result from serious reflection on a severe calamity.

"There is no fear," Miss Amiel justly observed to her sister, "of girls of their age indulging grief to an injurious extent. The loss of such a father is irreparable, and should be allowed to make a lasting impression on his children. A few tears are but a just tribute of gratitude and affection for years of anxiety and love. Besides, I should be sorry to be deprived of the most favourable opportunity I shall ever have," continued Miss Amiel, feelingly, "to talk over with our dear charges the great and solemn truths of our faith, to impress on

their minds the necessity and the beauty of holiness, the uncertainty of this life, the certainty of a future, and the gracious promises of our blessed Redeemer."

The good seed sown by those worthy women fell on ground which had been prepared for its reception. It was never choked, in after years, by prosperity or adversity ; and their letters to Mrs. Mordaunt at that time surprised and comforted her when most oppressed and cast down.

look. A groan burst from her lips, and she would have fallen had she not been supported by her sympathizing and watchful escort, Mr. Everett.

Though only a few weeks had elapsed since Mrs. Latour had parted from her niece, she was shocked at the alteration in her appearance. Mrs. Latour had earnestly desired to have her with her, and preparations had been made for her reception with such attention to her habits and tastes as showed she was a loved and welcome guest.

In order to alter the appearance of the apartment Mrs. Mordaunt had occupied under happier circumstances, the whole of the furniture had been changed, and a balcony added. This was partly filled with flowers in pots, which had been selected by their old friend Mr. Zweertz, the superintendent of the botanical garden; and Mrs. Latour had given up a small room adjoining, and fitted it up as a boudoir, with hanging shelves for books.

It was with a heavy heart, and most reluctantly, that Mrs. Mordaunt decided on sending for the girls. She felt the disadvantage it would be to bring them out so young to a country which afforded no means of improvement through the

aid of masters, and where they would be at once treated as women. But she had no longer the means of continuing their education. Mrs. Latour would willingly have borne their expenses a year or two longer ; but Mrs. Mordaunt could not bring herself to consent to such an arrangement, knowing her aunt's hospitable nature, and that she had always lived up to her income. She therefore lost no time in giving Mrs. Stewart the necessary notice.

Mrs. Stewart had looked for an early removal of her charges as soon as she heard of the death of Mr. Mordaunt. "It would be so natural for the disconsolate widow to wish to have them near her."

Redoubled efforts were made for their improvement, and extra lessons given in those branches of education in which they were most deficient. Truth to say, Mrs. Stewart and her sister had rarely educated girls so likely to do them credit ; already they were better informed than those of their age usually are. They had been well grounded in geography, and in history, sacred and profane, and spoke French as well as could be expected. Laura drew finely, and Constance had a voice

ance, that in extending a hand to each, he named them, inquiringly.


"How is dear mamma," they both exclaimed, "and where is she?"

"Well, my dear young friends, and not far off; but as she is not so strong as when you left her, and does not expect you, not having yet even heard of the arrival of a vessel, you must exercise a little patience, and allow me to prepare her for the meeting. Mrs. Smith will not, I am sure, object to entrusting you to my care, and I will take you to the house of a friend until I can break the joyful news to Mrs. Mordaunt."

Mrs. Smith requested the doctor to despatch a messenger to her husband, and decided on remaining on board till his arrival. The girls were great favourites with her and with everyone else, and the captain and sailors gave them three hearty cheers as the boat left the vessel.

There were none of those formalities which balk impatience and obstruct a disembarkation in Europe.

Though Laura and Constance knew they were not expected, their eyes involuntarily sought amongst the crowd on the beach for some loved face or other.



A high surf was running in at the time, and they were rather appalled, on nearing the shore, to observe that there was neither jetty, quay, or any convenience whatever for landing.

"Are we going in there, sir?" they exclaimed, in tones of dismay and alarm.

"Never fear, my young friends," said the doctor, laughing; "you'll be safe enough."

"Here are Bill and his brother," directing their attention as he spoke to two stalwart blacks, who were rowing; "they have stout legs and willing hearts. You may trust yourselves with them, I assure you."

"No fraid, missis," responded Bill, addressing himself to Laura; "I take care you. I land massa, afore now, 'pon me back."

These words, meant to be reassuring, made Laura shudder, and they both turned pale when they saw a parcel of herculean blacks, naked to the waist, wading through the water to the boat.

Laying hold of it, it was soon stranded, and ere they could make any resistance, the girls were seized on and carried through the surf to land.

Bill and his brother were both indignant at this interference with their privilege, and the former

and one, more confident than the rest, advanced with graceful ease, and leading her little boy and girl by the hand, desired her boy to "pull his foot 'gie the ladies," and the girl to "put her hand 'pon her tomick, and curtsey."

In spite of the girls' impatience to see Mrs. Mordaunt, they could not help being much amused by the novelty of the scene.

"All this must strike you as very strange," said Dr. Mildman, addressing himself to Laura, "coming as you do from a land of liberty, where, nevertheless, servants are kept at a great distance, and disciplined like soldiers."

"It certainly would strike a stranger," she said, "that in a land of slavery and arbitrary rule no one seems to be under the slightest restraint or control; but I was old enough when I left the West to feel only a momentary surprise."

"I am sorry, my young friends," continued the good doctor, "to leave you in such troublesome company, but I know how anxious you must be to see Mrs. Mordaunt, and will, therefore, lose no time in preparing her for the meeting."

"Oh, pray go, dear sir!" they both exclaimed. "We don't at all mind being left."

“ Well, good-bye, my dears. Mrs. Simpson will, I dare say, soon be in ; and I shall not be long away.”

Relieved of the restraint imposed by the Doctor’s presence, the neighbours soon began to flock in ; and the girls were rather embarrassed at finding that a difference of opinion had arisen as to their respective charms, each maintaining his or her opinion in that high nasal tone so peculiar to the blacks.

The entrance of their hostess at this juncture was an immense relief, and they greeted her with an alacrity at which she was much pleased. The lull was instantaneous ; and as soon as courtesies were exchanged, she motioned with her hand to the crowd, who withdrew with perfect ease and self-possession, smiling, bowing, and curtsying as they went out.

In spite of Dr. Mildman’s precautions, Mrs. Mordaunt was greatly agitated when she learnt that her beloved children, as she styled them both, were actually on shore, and at so short a distance from her. How much had happened since they last met ! She longed for, yet dreaded the meeting.

that the Assembly is composed of various sects, the majority of whom think it quite immaterial in what place service is performed : they contend for a purely spiritual worship, forgetting the total ignorance of our working population."

"How ill Mr. Dodesworth is looking," observed Constance : "it was not until he had been some time in the pulpit that I could at all recal his features."

"That is not surprising, my dear, for you were very young when you left ; but he really *is* looking much older than his age warrants. He works himself to death, and is grieved at the slow progress he makes. Before it is light, he gives prayers at his own house for the benefit of those who, having to enter on the duties of the day, either as labourers, clerks, or mechanics, could not attend at a later hour : an evening in the week is devoted to catechizing and expounding the Scriptures ; and another to teaching the old people to read. The majority are provided with spectacles at his expense ; and you have no idea what an extraordinary-looking set they are."

The girls laughed, and excused themselves for having done so.

"I assure you, my dears," said Mrs. Mordaunt, "I could scarce keep my own countenance."

"Do you think it of any use, dear aunt, trying to teach these old people?"

"Mr. Dodesworth is of opinion, my dear, that it will have a beneficial effect in many ways. They are more delighted than you can imagine when they are able to read even a few easy sentences; and the value they set on learning will no doubt be an encouragement to the juniors of their own families."

"I saw a great number of the congregation, mamma, with prayer-books; but they did not appear to be looking into them, but at Mr. Dodesworth, the whole time, so I suppose they could not read."

"Poor things!" said Mrs. Mordaunt; "it strikes me as a great mistake to deny to heathens all outward aids to devotion. I fancy Mr. Dodesworth is half afraid they will worship *him*, he is so constantly disclaiming for himself every kind of merit. Not long ago, he was talking of building a church by subscription. He contends that had he a church, he would make converts to Christianity, not by dozens, but by hundreds. A communion-

suspected as much ; but what makes you think, Laura, they are off our trees ?”

“ Because, aunt, I saw Joan pick them !”

“ Well, that is rather barefaced,” said Mrs. Latour, laughing, for she was much amused at Laura’s earnestness ; “ but it would be extremely difficult to preserve things which are so abundant from the depredations of the blacks. They seem to think themselves entitled to a tithe of their master’s property of every description.”

“ That is curious,” observed Laura ; “ for they guard their own very tenaciously.”

“ Don’t you remember, aunt, that it was only a few days ago that you rebuked Joan sharply for flinging a bottle at the head of a little boy whom she caught picking a cashew off one of her trees ?”

“ True, dearest,” interposed Mrs. Mordaunt, mildly ; “ but what can one expect from a slave ? Vices are engendered by the system, those of stealing and lying in particular. The latter vice has its origin in fear.”

“ Not in this instance, I fancy, aunt ; for Joan never has been brought up in fear of any one.”

“ I cannot answer for that, dearest ; for it is not more than twenty years since Joan has been with

me," said Mrs. Latour, "and the seeds of vice early sown are not easily eradicated. I don't really think she would take anything on which I set a value, nor would she persevere in a falsehood if questioned seriously."

"You are really very indulgent, aunt."

Mrs. Latour pleaded guilty, and added, "that Mr. Everett always called Joan the 'privileged humbug.'"

"Some years ago," she added, "whilst he was staying here, he lost a valuable mare through the neglect of Cudjoe, who galloped her into town, put her up without being rubbed down, and allowed her to drink a great quantity of water. As he was crossing the court, in no pleasant mood, he met Joan coming out of the poultry-yard with an apron full of corn meal. He says she must have done it to divert his attention, for directly she saw him, she drew up and began to lecture him on the sin of impatience. 'What was de matter wid he? Had he no fait, no religion, to fret so for de deate of de poor cretur? Didn't he know it was in Abraham's bosom?'

"What do you mean, you old hypocrite?" he

ferring occasionally with tradespeople and servants, and his very lively and observant nature, he would have returned as ignorant of foreign languages, and of the manners and customs of the inhabitants of the places at which they sojourned, as he was when he set out on his travels.

On his return, his father entered him at Lincoln's Inn, not with the view of his making the law a profession, but simply, he said, "to keep him out of harm's way."

Fortunately, Mr. Compton's means were ample, for Edward's studies were of a very desultory and not very profitable description.

Law, mathematics, theology, chemistry, and poetry occupied him by turns, but never sufficiently long to bear fruit.

On one table lay an epitome of the laws and institutions of the ancient Greeks in an unfinished state, and likely to remain so. By the side, a work on theology with marginal notes, and references in pencil to the Bible, in refutation or confirmation of the views of certain authors, whilst out of the leaves dropped scraps of poetry and fragments of a drama.

Edward's indulgent father lived only long

enough to see the partial success of his plan. The literary pursuits of his son had kept him from those vices in which so many young men in London pass the best years of their lives.

With the exception of a jointure of 1500*l.* per annum to his widow, and the interest of 5000*l.* to his daughter Honoria (the principal to be paid on her marriage), the fine estates left by Mr. Compton to his son were quite unencumbered ; but ere he settled in Europe, Edward was desirous to become personally known to "his people," and make arrangements for their welfare and happiness. In this wish he was encouraged by Mrs. Compton, for other reasons in addition to those already stated.

There is no property of such precarious value as a sugar estate. Besides the large annual outlay, there are many contingencies for which one should be prepared. An epidemic amongst the labourers, who cannot be replaced by others ; glanders amongst the stock ; a fire ; a hurricane, have each in their turn been sufficient to ruin for ever the prospects of an improvident planter.

Mrs. Compton was a woman of superior intellect and attainments, and still retained a large share of

advantageous match. There is no saying "Not at home" to an unexpected or unwelcome guest; no private snuggery, or impenetrable window-curtains, behind which to 'ensconce oneself; no knocker gives time for escape; no closed doors present a temporary barrier. Nor can a tour to the Continent be devised to avoid or baffle a troublesome suitor or importunate creditor. Through slight wooden partitions all that passes may be overheard, and what one does is soon known in the neighbourhood. It would be next to impossible to feign indisposition or a previous engagement; every window and door is left open for the admission of air, and oftentimes the whole edifice is surrounded by an open gallery, in which the family take exercise.

Honoria was careful to impress on Mrs. Compton that Mrs. Mordaunt was too unwell to return visits, and that Mrs. Latour never went out; and, after much pressing, that lady yielded to her daughter's entreaties to be allowed to invite Laura and Constance for a few days, and took advantage of Edward's absence to do so.

The girls were very reluctant to leave their happy home so soon, but Honoria had offered to

come for them in the little carriage, and to refuse might appear ungracious. The invitation was therefore accepted.

Compton House was situated, as most West India houses are, on a rising ground, and commanded a view of the sea, but it was sufficiently inland to admit of the growth of an ornamental shrubbery round it. The house was large, and elegantly furnished. In the music-room, besides a grand piano, there were several other instruments for the convenience of guests, and a handsome bookcase, containing a large collection of books in different languages; for though Compton excelled in manly sports, and delighted in them, he was decidedly a reading man.

The evenings during the girls' stay were devoted to music. Mrs. Compton listened with delight to the rich mellow tones of Constance's voice; and she was pleased that Honoria had at last found in Laura some one with whom to play her difficult duets.


So much was said about Edward Compton during this visit, that Laura almost shared his sister's regret that they had not met.

The young people took a ride every morning,

"Let us catch it," exclaimed Constance, turning with childlike simplicity from grave to gay.

Mr. Everett made a sign to the men, who cautiously and noiselessly approached to within a few paces, when a slight splash of one of the oars aroused the creature, which suddenly darted down and disappeared, leaving only a ripple on the spot where it had been seen. Mr. Everett laughed heartily at the evident disappointment of the girls.

"He was too experienced a fisherman," he said, "to expect to catch a turtle napping." He then described the most usual modes of taking them. "The coasts they most frequent are well known to the natives of South America, and of other warm climates. At the season when they come ashore to deposit their eggs, these men walk along the sandy beach plunging their cutlasses in the sand as they go, wherever there has been the slightest appearance of a disturbance of the surface. The eggs being covered only by a soft parchment-like skin, are easily pierced, and a small portion of the egg adhering to the cutlass betrays the nest, which often contains more than a hundred eggs. The finder then stations himself in a convenient posi-



tion to watch when the turtle comes on shore, and if he is quick-sighted and dexterous, rarely fails to secure it, by intercepting its return to the water, and turning it on its back, in which state it is perfectly helpless. The instinct and cunning of these creatures is wonderful ! They are often seen to turn as they move along, and obliterate with their fins every trace of their trail. Sometimes they are taken in nets of a large mesh extended across a bay, or a narrow channel, through which a strong current is running. Their fins get entangled in the net, and their efforts to escape only secure them the more effectually."

"What hideous looking things they are," observed Laura. "Many people make wry faces at the idea of eating frogs, but I really think they are pretty looking creatures in comparison."

"Chacun à son vilain petit goût, Laura," said Mr. Everett; "and I confess to a great weakness for turtle-flesh."

No one knew better than the aforesaid gentleman how to beguile time agreeably; and the girls were quite sorry when, on rounding a point of land, the place of their destination was pointed out to them.

CHAPTER XVII.

AT the early hour of eight, the company had already begun to assemble in the ball-room, a large space enclosed and floored for the occasion. The ceiling was composed of flags, lent by different captains of merchant vessels loading in the bays in the vicinity; the sides, formed of cocoa-nut branches, interwoven and decorated here and there with the gigantic foliage and gorgeous flowers of the West. To the posts were bound fruits on their stems, such as the orange and pomegranate, and vines, to which hung the yellow water-lemon, the most refreshing of tropical fruits.

In an ante-room one caught a glimpse every now and then of ladies in ball-dresses, divesting themselves of the skirts of their riding-habits, and of their hoods and *masks*.

The latter, made of pasteboard and silk, was

kept on by a string and a bead in the mouth, and found to be a better protection against the scorching winds, sun, and dust, than either broad-brimmed hat or veil. The sole objection to their universal adoption was their being almost insupportably hot after awhile.

The ball-room was well lighted, and groups of officers in scarlet uniforms gave it so gay and brilliant an appearance, that to unsophisticated girls like Laura and Constance it seemed quite a fairy scene, and their young hearts fluttered with undefined sensations!

Large spaces were left for the free admission of air. There was no moon, but the bright stars seemed to stand out, as it were, from their orbits, and rendered every object without visible through the darkness of night.

There being yet a preponderance of ladies, it was decided to await the arrival of more gentlemen from town. With the exception of the cousins, there was scarce a girl who did not expect in the course of the evening a lover, or a favourite partner.

At last a large party was announced, with whom were the Comptons.

chair, and a table. For the bedsteads there was a scramble.

Some of the gentlemen had taken the precaution of bringing their own hammocks to sling on the brackets with which every house was in those hospitable days provided, and a few had recourse to the trees ; the rest thought themselves fortunate in obtaining a pillow for their heads, and bestowed themselves on the table or the bare boards.

As soon as coffee had been served in the morning, they acted on the understanding that they were to get out of the way as fast as possible to allow the ladies an opportunity of taking their bath—a luxury which none dispense with in a warm climate, and which can scarce be appreciated by those who have not felt the enervating effects of great heat.

The gentlemen having betaken themselves to the mill-dam or reservoir, the ladies had undisturbed possession of the river, and at last fixed on a spacious pool with a miniature cascade falling into it, screened and overshadowed by clusters of waving bamboos.

What a happy, merry party was that day assembled under their shade !

Those who had first disencumbered themselves of their loose dresses, might be seen, *en chemise*, barefooted, paddling about the more shallow parts of the river, searching under the stones and gravel for the small fish and crayfish with which they abound.

Every now and then, the claw of a crab would protrude, as if in defiance, when, without any distinction of grade, all would rush forward, and combine their efforts to seize and bind it, and failure or success was alike proclaimed by shouts of laughter.

I have often heard the creole of the present day compared with those of the olden time, and the superiority of the former much vaunted. They certainly have gained in moral and intellectual culture, but I have a great weakness for the open-hearted, generous, *naïve* and graceful creole of bygone days; though it must be admitted that their generosity was apt to degenerate into extravagance, their *naïveté* into absurdity, and their graceful nonchalance of manner into indolence and apparent apathy.


The breakfast at Mr. and Mrs. Vanderslock's would have been considered a dinner in Europe.

and Honoria was confided to the care of Mrs. Everett and her brother. The latter, though never backward in his attentions to his sister, was a ready volunteer on this occasion, as it afforded him freer access to the company of the cousins.

With the assistance of his lively friend Mr. Perry, he had provided them with rustic seats under some shady trees near the mouth of the river, from whence they had a capital view of the sport.

The blacks are naturally volatile and noisy. They showed their white teeth, and laughed and shouted till the woods echoed the sounds, whilst troops of little urchins hovered about the banks of the river, clapping their hands on their paunches, and capering with delight, either from enjoyment of the sport, or in anticipation of a feast.

Edward Compton ran great risks that day of being considered a ladies' man. Mr. Perry had at all times an inexhaustible fund of wit and good-humour, and the moments flew so swiftly that the party were surprised when warned it was time to return to the house to dress for dinner.



The guests were the same as on the previous day, with the exception of the junior officers, who had been obliged to return to their military duties. As usual, the evening was spent in singing and dancing.



inclined for a hearty laugh, but checked herself. After all, thought she, there are as many absurd errors (which have as little warrant in Scripture) believed in as implicitly by the educated classes of all countries.

It was barely light when the party arrived at the base of the Souffrière Mountain; there they left their mules, and the pioneers led the way, first looking at their cutlasses as an officer does at his sword previous to going into battle. They knew they were to have hard work with inanimate nature. The girls started off with such alacrity, that Mr. Everett advised them to husband their strength for the exertions which would be required of them later. For upwards of an hour all went smoothly; they were following a track made by the charcoal-burners. Suddenly it ceased, and their progress was arrested by a large pit, beyond which there appeared no opening. Here the difficulties of the ascent began. For hours the party depended entirely on the efforts of the pioneers to clear a passage, and when cleared they could only advance one at a time and at a snail's pace. Gigantic trees, meeting overhead, excluded both air and light, whilst

from their branches hung in festoons to the ground lianes, several inches in diameter, barring all passage and difficult to be cut asunder. When thus closely jammed together, and unable to move, the heat was almost suffocating. Mrs. Everett looked at the tattered garments and crimson cheeks of her young friends, and almost repented the undertaking. The only sounds to be heard when the men paused to rest their wearied arms, was the monotonous dropping of the seeds of the poix doux, on which the parrots and ramiers feed. The former betray their whereabouts by an occasional cawing, whilst the latter lie "perdu" among the branches, regaling themselves on their favourite food.

Mr. Perry, who was a keen lawyer, was not less a keen sportsman, and instinctively shouldered his rifle, though Mrs. Everett laughingly told him that it required a more practised eye than his to distinguish the dark plumage of a ramier amidst the thick and sombre foliage of the poix doux tree.

Perry did, however, succeed in bringing down, very slightly wounded, a green parrot of a species remarkable for the variety and brilliant colour of

itself in all its terrors, did it become the fashion to visit it.

There were some slips and slides in descending the mountain, and even a few awkward falls, but the ringing, joyous laugh so invariably followed, that it was evident there was neither fracture nor dislocation to be apprehended. Mrs. Everett was so knocked up she had to be lifted into the saddle, and sat a dead weight, with scarce energy enough to guide the animal, which, however, picked its way carefully, and carried her safely to its haven of rest and refreshment.

The road to Mr. Smith's hospitable mansion lay partly through an extensive sugar estate. Its waving fields of golden, luscious canes, spread out far and wide, numerous herds browsed on its rich pastures, a broad and rapid river flowed through the centre, and on its banks stood the thatched cottages of the labourers, embowered in clusters of the broad, shining-leaved plantain-tree, affording both food and shelter.

On reaching Mr. Smith's, the ladies were glad to retire to their rooms, and have their tea taken to them, but the gentlemen supped, and their couviviality was prolonged to a late hour. Amidst

a hum of voices and the jingle of glasses, Mr. Perry produced the following verses :—

“ Amazed the mountain spirit viewed,
While brooding o'er his craggy throne,
Involv'd in storms and solitude,
The vision strange of forms unknown.

“ The forms of angels, fair and bright,
Where female foot ne'er trod before,
He saw with wonder and delight ;
He saw to wonder and adore.

“ And sure he deemed them sylphs that fly
Impassive, on the buoyant air,
Or haply genii of the sky,
Alighted from the rainbow there.

“ For naught of mortal charms knew he,
Or e'er of mortal beauty heard,
Since first emerging from the sea,
Aloft his cloud-capp'd crest he reared.

“ And what amid his desert shades,
Where rocks and woods primæval grow,
Of Dryad nymphs, or Dian's maids,
Could he like old Parnassus know ?


“ Alike to all unknown, unseen,
In isolated grandeur lost,
He tower'd the monarch of the scene,
Of wilds and fragments round him tost.

and handled every object that presented itself to their view. Pins and needles were begged for; seized on with avidity, and transferred to the nose, ears, or chin, with as much alacrity as if they had been the most costly jewels.

Laura and Constance were at first astonished and amused; but their familiarity at last so exceeded the bounds of propriety, that it made them rather nervous, and they looked at Mrs. Everett as if inquiring "where it was to end?"

That lady was herself somewhat puzzled. Each pounced on some article of wearing-apparel within their reach; gowns, caps, and bonnets were tried on; and the appearance of these savages under such incongruities of dress, set the girls laughing in spite of the struggles to get to the looking-glass, where, when they saw themselves reflected, they screamed with delight, jabbered and clapped their hands like overgrown children, till exhausted by their exertions, they sunk into chairs, or fell sprawling on the beds.

Mrs. Everett was at last so annoyed by their rudeness and pertinacity (for they begged for everything, and would take no refusal), that, by



way of diversion, she began bargaining in the negro patois for the few articles she found they had brought with them, such as carved and dyed calabashes, sifters, straw fans, and baskets. The latter are made square, with covers, and of all sizes, not to be carried in the hand, but on the head, and are so ingeniously contrived as to be impervious to rain, for which reason, and their extreme lightness, they are preferred to portmanteaus, and are much used in countries where everything is transported by manual labour.

In spite of the purchases made by Mrs. Everett, and the presents given by Laura and her cousin, their obtrusive visitors still lingered unaccountably. When they did go, it was discovered that they had purloined a silk handkerchief, a pair of scissors, Mr. Everett's boot-hooks, and a pair of plated spurs.

The girls were indignant at their dishonesty, but all agreed that they were well rid of them at any sacrifice, and ended by laughing heartily at thoughts of the puzzle they would be in as to the uses of some of their acquisitions.

The following day the Everetts and their

and irretrievably in love at first sight, that reason no longer held her sway, and she might question him as to congeniality of temper, similarity of tastes and opinions, to which he could but answer, "Je l'aime parceque je l'aime ;" and were she to object, how embarrassing would be his position.

After all, thought he, the girl may not like me ! Such an idea was too painful to dwell on, and an interview with his mother was again put off. Though not very clear-sighted in finding out the secret springs and motives of action in others, Edward could not but perceive that obstacles to his wishes were rising up in another quarter. When he called at Mrs. Latour's, he was rarely asked to stay as he had been at first. The old lady, he fancied, looked more than usually stately, and then the rides with his young friends, in which he so much delighted, were constantly deferred or given up entirely on the most frivolous pretences.

A lover is, however, always fertile in expedients, and Edward at last fixed on a plan for enjoying without restraint the company of his inamorata.

A chalybeate spring in the neighbourhood of Compton Vale was much spoken of, and Laura

Latour and her cousin had often expressed a wish to see it. For a length of time the falling in of a bank had rendered the road impassable for horses. At length all obstructions were removed, and the happy idea struck Edward Compton to make a party to visit it. Accordingly he proposed to his mother to invite Mr. Everett, Mr. Zweertz, and some officers, to ride out for the purpose, and to breakfast afterwards. "But might it not appear uncivil, mother," he added, "not to ask Mrs. Everett, and Petronella Zweertz and her sister. The Mordaunt girls, too, might like to see it."

"I have no objection," replied Mrs. Compton. "Honorina has been long wishing to have the latter for a few days, and they may as well come now as at any other time."

Compton's face was radiant with delight, and he was about to throw himself into his mother's arms, and thank her for so ready an acquiescence in his wishes; but he checked himself, recollecting that as yet she was in total ignorance of his feelings. Truth to say, as his passion increased he became more timid of success.

On receiving his credentials from his mother, Edward kissed her cheek with more than usual


stay some days, and what might not those days bring forth. "Would his mother like his beloved? Would his beloved like her?"

An elegant breakfast had been laid out in an open gallery, commanding a view of the whole estate. Every one was struck with its high state of cultivation, and with the recent improvements in the house and grounds, and complimented Compton thereon. But he disclaimed all merit, saying that "The manager must have the credit of the former, and that, in regard to the latter, he had only carried out his mother's suggestions."

Mrs. Compton looked tenderly at her son. She ate very little at breakfast, and not a look or a word of his escaped her notice; but his attentions had been so general, that she was as much at fault as ever in regard to the object of his love.

On rising from table, he seated himself by Constance, and appeared to be in earnest conversation with her. As usual, she was very animated.

Mrs. Compton was on the opposite side of the room, and had laid hold of the cords of a Venetian blind, to let it down, but she paused a second, attracted by the sound of Constance's voice.



"She screamed so violently," said Constance, "that I got out of bed, but could see nothing. In the morning I found poor Poll with her head jammed between the wires, and a large rat jumped out of the door of the cage. It had been negligently left unfastened; happily, the rat had preferred the bread with which the cage was strewed to my pretty bird."

"Absurd child!" thought Mrs. Compton, and the blind rattled as it descended rapidly.

"Honoriamy love," said she to her daughter, whom she followed to her bedroom that evening; "your brother has no doubt made you his confidante, and——"

"What do you mean, dear mamma?" said the unsuspecting girl, in a tone of surprise, "Edward has never had any secrets from you."

"I had hoped he would not," said Mrs. Compton; "but I was mistaken. Perhaps you can tell me who is the object of his attachment?"


"Indeed, I cannot, dear mamma;" and Honoriam looked so much in earnest that Mrs. Compton could not but be convinced that on that point she was as ignorant as herself, perhaps even more so.

She was only puzzled as to which of the cousins he accorded a preference ; but the idea of Edward's being in love with any one had never suggested itself to Honoria's mind. She had sometimes thought she would like Constance for a sister ; but she was young yet, and Edward had always treated her as a child ; whilst his natural shyness in ladies' company had never seemed to wear off with Laura. She fancied her mother was mistaken ; for if her dear brother was in love, and wished to be married, why should he not say so at once ? That he might not be agreeable to her whom he selected, she looked on as an impossibility.

Honoria little knew the tilts that the arbitrary, mischievous little god often runs against the goddess of reason.

Never had three days been spent more happily by guests than were spent by those who had been assembled at Compton Vale, and it was with regret they separated.

Ere a fortnight had elapsed, the same party (with the exception of the Zweertzs) met again under the hospitable roof of Mr. and Mrs. Everett.



The morning after their arrival, it was arranged by some to go to fish off the rocks, at a short distance below the house. Mrs. Compton and Mrs. Everett preferred their books. The young ladies had as little success as ladies usually have on such occasions, and there being no protection against the sun, soon decided on returning home. Mr. Everett accompanied them, Mr. Perry and Edward Compton remaining behind. The latter was a keen sportsman, and used the harpoon dexterously; and his friends left him watching, with the eagerness of an amateur, an enormous "stinging ray," which was gliding about in the most tantalizing manner close at his feet. From its perseverance in returning to the same spot, he concluded that it sheltered under the rock on which he was standing, and that it would, sooner or later, be within reach of his harpoon; and he stood prepared to strike on the first favourable opportunity. But ere Mr. Everett and the girls had ascended the hill which led to the house, plunge was heard, and, on turning round, they were shocked at seeing Edward Compton in the sea dressed as they had left him.

Mr. Perry's cries for help were loud and


alarming, and were instantly responded to by Mr. Everett, who halloed to his servant to join him.

Laura flew down the hill with the rapidity of a lapwing, followed by Mr. Everett, Honoria, and Constance, as fast as their trembling limbs would carry them ; but before the latter could arrive, Laura had succeeded, with Mr. Perry's assistance, in unchaining a boat which was at hand, but so concealed by the brushwood, under which it had been placed for shelter, that it had not been observed by the latter.

Mr. Everett and the servant took each an oar, and Mr. Perry seized the rudder, steering in the direction in which the accident had happened, calling out loudly at the same time, to let Edward know they were at hand.

Great was their surprise, on rounding a projecting rock which had hidden him from their view, to see him buffeting the waves in the wake of an enormous fish which was making out to sea at a rapid rate, the harpoon sticking in its back.

The girls regained a small rising, and stood for some minutes watching the progress of the boat




which was to rescue Edward from his perilous position.

"Oh, Laura!" said Honoria, with distended eyes and pallid lips, her habitual composure quite forsaking her; "see, the current appears to be carrying Edward out!"

It was evident that he was moving away rather than towards the boat, and the agitation of the whole party became excessive.

"Good heavens!" she continued, "he *must* see the boat; surely he is not going after the monster, and yet it would appear so!"

They were not kept much longer in suspense, the boat gained on him and he was taken in, but instead of returning to shore, the whole party started apparently in pursuit. The harpoon was still firm in the creature's back, and there could be no doubt that Edward had hold of the line to which it was attached. Soon after, the party lay on their oars for a few seconds, and appeared to be making an attempt to secure the prize; but after some desperate struggles it went off again at redoubled speed, dragging the boat almost under water. The staff of the harpoon still served as a guide, and the exciting chase continued.



To an indifferent person it would have been curious to watch the trial of strength, of skill, and of speed between the pursuing and the pursued. For more than an hour it had lasted, when the wind rose and the weather became lowering,—a new feeling of danger sprang up in the breasts of the lookers-on.

Meanwhile, the boat darted forward, sometimes in one direction, sometimes in another, and was dragged along with such velocity that it is surprising it was not swamped. At last it became a mere speck, and was scarce discernible by the naked eye, and the girls ran to the house for the telescope. They found Mrs. Everett had it in hand, reporting progress. Suddenly a cry of horror burst from her lips, and from the lips of all ! The staff, which stood up like a mast, and had hitherto served as a *point de vue*, had disappeared, nor was the boat visible.

“Where, where is the boat ?” they each inquired of the other.

An old fisherman who had just come up to sell his fish strained his eyes in the direction of theirs, but saw nothing at first. At last he said :—

“You not looking in de right place, ladies ; more

to de leff, more to de leff, but—someting must ha been happen—de boat not moving. I don't see nobody in de boat," he continued, "sea berry high, and dere is de storm coming."

The distress of the whole of the party on land was indescribable. All kinds of fancies took possession of their minds.

"Edward had fallen overboard in his attempt to secure the ray. The boat had upset. There were shoals of sharks about!"

Mrs. Everett sank into a chair, and covered her face with her hands, whilst Honoria flung herself into her mother's arms.

Laura was the first to recover her presence of mind; she seized the telescope: "Thank God!" she exclaimed, "I see the boat moving this way, but the sea is running so high I cannot ascertain the number in it."

Her hand trembled so she could no longer hold the glass, and it would have fallen had not the old fisherman taken it from her.

"Gie it to me, missis," he said, pitying her distress; "one, two, tree, four — all right, ma'am."

What a relief to their overcharged hearts!


The wind was high and the waves baffling, so that the progress of the boat was slow ; but it gradually became discernible, even without the aid of a glass, and at last reached the shore.

Directly the safety of all was ascertained, the elder ladies became clamorous in condemning the foolhardiness of the adventure, and Mrs. Everett declared she should "give her husband a good scolding for his folly ;" but the party looked so wet, pale, and exhausted when they made their appearance, that their female kind gathered round them, solicitous only to soothe and comfort ; and after having partaken of a bowl of hot Cashew punch, they were recommended to go to bed for a couple of hours. Edward was seriously fatigued by his exertions, and consented. Laura had disappeared the moment he entered, and the first salutations over, his eyes wandered hurriedly round the room, apparently in search of some object. Mrs. Compton observed the movement.

"Where is Laura ?" he whispered Constance.

She turned her head and looked in the direction of the verandah at the back of the house.

Edward seemed for a moment irresolute, then walked out stealthily, unobserved, as he imagined.



He found Laura with humid eyes and flushed cheeks. What passed between them is only surmised.

Was it accident, or anxiety for her son, that soon after led Mrs. Compton in that direction?

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APTER XXI.

foolhardiness of the
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scolding for his time all appearance of fatigue had disappeared,
pale, and even and mirth and good humour prevailed
pearance, generally. There were, however, two exceptions
them, even though Mrs. Compton addressed Laura severely
after in endearing terms, she was evidently
pur nervous and *distracted*; and Perry, who sat opposite

to Compton and the cousins, appeared far
from easy and comfortable. Edward was seated
between them, and the young lawyer kept looking
first at one and then at the other, as if seeking an
explanation of the terms on which they seemed all
at once to stand. His uneasiness was too undisguised to escape Edward's observation; and
attributing it in some degree to the morning's
adventure, he began to banter him thereon as
soon as the cloth was removed, and the conver-

a set of signals,
to when re-

ward, out of
sca, dressed as his
really ran the risk of

.,' said Edward, laughing, "that I
slightest intention of performing such
No one could have been more taken by
than I was; and if I had not managed to
my jacket, and rid myself of my planter's
should have been in an awkward 'fix,' as
kees say."

r did it happen, then?" inquired every

l, I'll tell you. As I struck the ray, it
sudden plunge, and not being sufficiently
giving it line, I was dragged off the rock.
lustily enough for help, I thought, for I was
indful of the duty of self-preservation; but
the line still in my hand, and the harpoon
in the monster's back, the temptation
on got the better of my prudence. In
fancied it would soon be exhausted from
blood, and its efforts to rid itself of such a

A month passed away, *couleur de rose*, in that happy family circle, when one morning, as Edward was reading aloud to Mrs. Mordaunt and the girls, Jimbo rushed breathless into the room, and announced, without the slightest preamble, that "the French had landed."

"How did they come, Jimbo," inquired Compton, laughingly; "in an air-balloon, with velvet slippers on their feet and fans in their hands, or on the backs of dolphins, armed with branches of coral?"

"Massa Edward, Massa Edward!" said Jimbo, looking quite aghast; "no make no fun: me tell you for true, for true! Me hearee so—look pon signal!"

Edward mechanically raised his eyes to the open window, from which the fort might be seen standing out in bold relief against the clear blue sky, and from the flagstaff there certainly floated an unusual signal.

In the West, the arrival of a vessel from Europe is an event of great moment. It brings news to individuals of loved absent ones—to all, the latest political and commercial changes, some of the necessities, and most of the luxuries of life—

and hung up in every house are a set of signals, painted and framed, to be referred to when required.

Edward looked at one of these merely out of curiosity, but no sooner had he done so than his colour rose, and, turning to Mrs. Mordaunt, he said, in an agitated tone of voice—

“Jimbo has been rather premature in announcing the landing of our visitors, but they cannot be far off. There is a signal for several French ships to windward, and this island must be their destination. I had hoped that, amidst the convulsions of the Old World, such an insignificant corner as this would have been forgotten, but it seems I was mistaken, and we must be prepared for the worst. Our means of defence are very inefficient, but must be made the best of, and there is not a moment to be lost.”

The ladies exchanged looks of mingled astonishment and terror.

“I shall be off immediately to Government House, to tender my services; but first, dear Laura, allow me to write a line at your desk to my mother. I shall be detained long beyond my usual hour of returning home—probably all night;

French. She was still nominally a Roman Catholic, had been born and bred in the French capital, and had lived the greater part of her life amongst the élite of French society, in her youth justly considered the most polished, witty, and conversational in Europe. It was not, therefore, surprising that she should, without the slightest disloyalty to her adopted country, have rejoiced at the opportunity afforded her to follow the forms and ceremonies of her faith, to speak again her native language, and revive her recollection of people, places, and events.

General Blanchelande was a man of cultivated mind, handsome person, and most engaging address. He was, in every sense of the word, a perfect gentleman. His first aim, after regulating the affairs of the colony over which he had been appointed Governor, was to rule with moderation and judgment, and to win the goodwill of the inhabitants. With Mrs. Latour's family he was much pleased, individually and collectively. Laura, of whom he had merely caught a glimpse once or twice on horseback, he pronounced "*une fille superbe ;*" and "*la petite Constance charmante de tout manière,*" and more French than English, "*à part le teint.*"

On Laura's return home after an absence of two weeks, she was much surprised to find the French Governor and his staff habitual visitors at her aunt's; and Edward Compton, who spoke French fluently, soon forgot his humiliations, and began to fraternize with the conquerors.

Permission had been given to the Governor and his staff to drop in of an evening, after the sociable manner of his country, and it became difficult to exclude others. Soon Mrs. Latour's house was the resort of all who preferred the society of refined females and the charms of music to "dignity balls" and the gaming-table.

Mrs. Mordaunt spoke French but indifferently. Her health was delicate and her spirits broken, and there appeared to her an impropriety in receiving as habitual visitors the enemies of her country—men of whose character and antecedents so little could be known; but these réunions apparently gave her aunt so much satisfaction, that she refrained from any remonstrance, and contented herself with requesting their old friend Mr. Zweertz to sanction the meetings by his presence, and to bring his daughters with him to help

Laura and Constance entertain their stranger guests.

Mr. Zweertz gladly acceded to the request of one he so loved and respected, and was not sorry to do anything he knew might be agreeable to the Governor, who, though he had appointed him an interpreter, avoided as much as possible taking him off from his duties of Superintendent of the Botanical Garden ; besides Mr. Zweertz, General Blanchelande was always attended by his secretary, Mr. Gorget, of whom I must now give some account.

Jules Gorget was a great contrast to his chief in appearance. Small in stature and dark complexioned, he would have been considered plain but for a pair of large, dark, and very expressive eyes : in other respects he somewhat resembled him, and was in every way worthy of the friendship with which he was honoured. Gorget had no advantages of birth or connexions to boast of. His father was a small farmer in the south of France. The family had lived for several generations in the same neighbourhood, and had been so honest and independent in their several callings, that they were respected by all ranks, and their influence


had extended far beyond the narrow circle in which they moved. Jules had been educated by his mother's brother, the curé of the village, a learned pious man, whose desires were limited to the faithful discharge of the duties of a Christian minister. Under such a preceptor, it is not to be supposed Jules Gorget imbibed any martial propensities; and when a commission in the army was offered him by a man of rank to whom his father had rendered many services, it was only accepted in compliance with the wishes of his parent.

Blanchelande was the colonel of the regiment to which Gorget had been named. For many months the latter was only known to the former by sight and by name; but being called as a witness in a disagreeable affray which took place between some of the garrison and the inhabitants of the place in which they were quartered, he gave his evidence in so clear and so dispassionate a manner, that he attracted the colonel's attention. The regiment was soon after ordered on foreign service, and during a long voyage they were thrown so much together, that the favourable opinion Blanchelande had formed of him was confirmed, and he took the

was not prepossessing." Mr. Zweertz's only defence was that "Captain Berchet might be better than he looked, and that it was wrong to condemn any one so hastily."

For some weeks a great clamour was raised against Mrs. Latour for admitting the foreigners under her roof, and on such sociable terms; but Blanchelande's judicious mode of carrying on the government, and his very conciliatory manners, gradually won on even the most prejudiced; and first one and then another dropped in of an evening—at first it was said out of curiosity, but it was evident at last they came for their gratification and amusement.

Laura Latour was generally admired. Though forgetful of her extraction from the "detested race," and thinking, perhaps, to please Edward, she was barely civil to them—so little so, indeed, that to her surprise he often acted as mediator. The fact is, that Compton's knowledge of French had removed the principal impediment to a good understanding between the parties, and his entrance always seemed to diffuse pleasure around. His handsome, intelligent face would have been a passport for him into any society.



His friend Mr. Perry, though an accomplished scholar, knew French very imperfectly, and consequently was unable to enter into conversation with any degree of satisfaction. He naturally saw with a jaundiced eye all that passed, and did not fail to express his astonishment at Edward's growing intimacy with such a "beggarly set."

"I went," said he, "the other day with Zweertsz to pay a visit at the garrison, and found them all walking about in their shirt sleeves; and in the quarters I literally saw no conveniences for washing but a parcel of pie-dishes!"

Edward laughed heartily.

"You must recollect, Perry, that they are not as used to the climate as we are, and I assure you that not many months back, on going one morning to call on a young countryman, I found him walking about his drawing-room in a perfect state of nature—taking what he calls an 'air-bath.' With regard to the other charge, I must say that I think it matters little whether a man performs his ablutions in a square, an oval, or a round basin: the only question is, Does he keep himself clean? Public baths are in more common use with foreigners than with us, which accounts for the

introduce to my readers as destined to play a conspicuous part in my tale. At first from good feeling, but afterwards from preference, he sought Gorget's company, and a long and steady friendship sprang up between the young men.

END OF VOLUME I.



